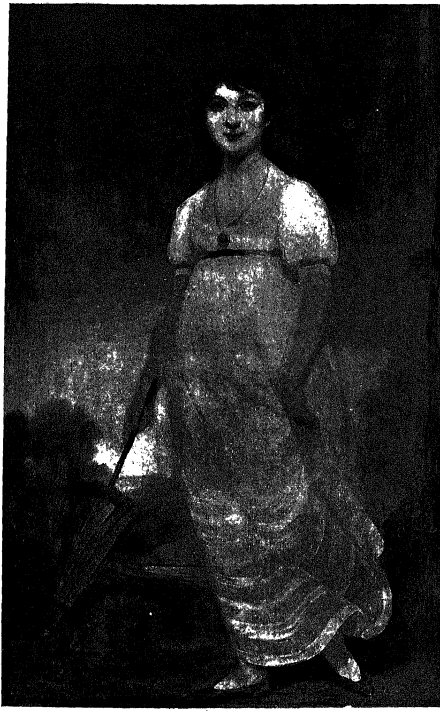

Frontispiece] *[J. Zoffany, R.A., pinxit*

JANE AUSTEN.

PERSONAL ASPECTS
OF
JANE AUSTEN

BY

MARY AUGUSTA AUSTEN-LEIGH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO ALL
TRUE LOVERS OF
JANE AUSTEN AND HER WORKS
THIS BOOK IS
DEDICATED

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PERSONAL ASPECTS OF JANE AUSTEN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

JANE AUSTEN was born at Steventon Rectory in Hampshire on Saturday, December 16, 1775, and died in Mrs. David's lodgings, College Street, Winchester, on Friday, July 18, 1817, in her forty-second year.

Little was known by the world in general either of herself or of her surroundings for many years after the latter date. She had named her brother Henry as her literary executor, and in six months' time he published the two novels she had left in manuscript, 'Northanger Abbey' and 'Persuasion' (to which he himself gave these titles), prefixing to the former a short sketch of their author, called a 'Biographical Notice of Jane Austen.'

The same 'Notice,' enlarged by a few additional paragraphs, appeared again in 1833, when Mr. R. Bentley, who had acquired the copyright of all her works, brought out a complete edition of the novels, no other edition being published during the first sixty-four years that elapsed after her death. The smallness of the print employed, ill-suited to any but young and strong eyes, may in part account for the slowness with which her fame grew during that period. But though a slow it was a sure growth, and with an increase in the number of her readers came an increased desire to know more details concerning herself.

As curiosity on these points became stronger, while the family remained silent, it was not unnatural that in the absence of definite information certain erroneous ideas should be entertained, and some mistaken statements made respecting herself, her home, and her position and opportunities in life. Reviewers were inclined to assume that her outlook upon the world at large must have been narrow and restricted to a small circle, though chiefly, as it would seem, because they themselves knew little about her beyond

the facts that she had been a daughter of the Rector of Steventon, that she had lived in the country, had never mixed in literary circles, and had died almost before reaching middle age. Surprise would sometimes be expressed as to how, under these disadvantageous circumstances, it should have been possible for her to paint the varied pictures of human nature and give the accurate descriptions of contemporary manners with which her books were filled. Again, conjectures were made that these dealt with one class of life only, that of the English gentry, not from choice but from necessity, because she had no knowledge of anything beyond it. It was also reported that 'Jane Austen was not fond of children'—it was left to a modern foreign critic to add that 'She was not fond of animals.'

To some degree, though not entirely, these mistaken ideas were dispelled when, in 1869, the first 'Memoir of Jane Austen' was published by her nephew, the Rev. J. E. Austen-Leigh. He had been the youngest of the mourners at her funeral fifty years earlier, and many friends, knowing how well fitted he was to write a memoir of his aunt,

monotonous life,' while one critic also gives it as his opinion that 'the range of her sympathies was narrow.' 'Miss Austen lacks the breadth and depth of feeling which distinguished her great successor, George Eliot.' Another says, 'a neat, natty, little artist was Jane Austen,' and yet another, 'When we compare her to George Eliot the reader will see at once the eminence on which we place her.'

Such were some of the judgments passed on Jane Austen half a century ago.

But a considerable amount of additional information concerning her earlier life and its surroundings has now been acquired, of which later biographers were able to avail themselves. First in order came the 'Letters of Jane Austen,'[1] published in 1884 by Lord Brabourne. The existence of these letters was known to the writer of the 'Memoir,' but he could not examine them, as their owner, his cousin, was then too infirm to undertake the labour of looking through them and, without having done so, she did not wish to place them in any other hands.

[1] *Letters by Jane Austen*, edited by Lord Brabourne. (Bentley & Son, 1884.)

They had been written by Jane to Cassandra, and though of high value in supplying a biographer with many facts, are yet a peculiarly restricted selection, which should never be taken as a specimen of her general correspondence, having been spared by Cassandra only in the full belief that they contained nothing sufficiently interesting to induce any future generation to give them to the world. Since the publication of these letters by Lord Brabourne, other letters, written by more distant branches of the Austen family, have been recovered, which bear upon the life at Steventon Rectory in old days, and consequently upon that of Jane herself.

Another book, giving some authentic details of the same, dealing principally with the careers of her sailor brothers,[1] was published in 1916 by a great nephew and niece. All the fresh knowledge thus acquired has been embodied in the latest 'Life of Jane Austen,'[2] which was published in

[1] *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers*, by J. H. Hubback and Edith C. Hubback. (John Lane Co.)

[2] *Life and Letters of Jane Austen*, by W. Austen-Leigh and R. A. Austen-Leigh. (Smith, Elder & Co.)

1913 by a great nephew and a great, great nephew.

So much fresh information having been given to the world respecting Jane Austen's youthful years since the publication of the original 'Memoir,' which dealt almost wholly with her later life, it certainly occasions some surprise to find critics of the present day apparently disregarding these later biographies and reverting to the standpoint of those writers who knew only the earliest. Yet so it is. In a recently published book we again hear of her 'narrow experience,' and are told that she 'lived aside from the world,' also that 'concerning her personal character and private interests we know remarkably little,' and that 'her life provided even less variety of incident than she discovered at Longbourn or Uppercross,' while the same writer states, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that 'her father was not very much better educated and scarcely more strenuous than his neighbours —nor were there granted to her any of the consolations of culture.'

Since it is still possible for an earnest and acute student of her works to offer, as

ascertained facts, views of his own concerning their writer which contain so many misapprehensions, it may be well once more to record a few simple truths about Jane Austen's position in life, her education, and her choice of subjects as an author.

CHAPTER II

POSITION

THAT Jane Austen should take as her field of work one which, though far from being narrow, was certainly definite, the life, namely, of the English gentry, was so natural as hardly to require either remark or explanation. It was the class to which her ancestors had for some centuries belonged and with which she had always associated. The Austens of Steventon Rectory were descended from many generations of Kentish Austens who, arising like other county families from the powerful clan of Clothiers, known in the Middle Ages as the 'Gray coats of Kent,' were, in the sixteenth century, settled as landowners in two small and picturesque old manor houses, Grovehurst and Broadford, which still form part of the Austen property, though the heads of the family removed long ago to larger habitations and

increased possessions in the parish of Horsmonden, near Sevenoaks, a neighbourhood where the name of Austen has long been known and held in honour. They were a purely English family. No admixture of Scottish, Irish, or foreign blood appears in the pedigree of the Austens of Broadford, which runs back to the close of the sixteenth century.

They were also a race accustomed to prize both religion and education. On the tomb of the wife of the first John Austen, of Broadford (Joan Berry), in Horsmonden Church, dated A.D. 1604, it is recorded that she met her death 'often utteringe these speeches, "Let neither husband nor children nor lands nor goods separate me from my God."' A hundred years later another Mrs. John Austen existed, whose name (Elizabeth Weller) deserves to be held in perpetual respect and esteem by her descendants. In her portrait, taken when she was a blooming young woman, she appears in brocade and pearls, suitable to the wife of the heir to the estate, and future Lady of the Manor. But the latter position she never held, as her husband died before his father, who, like

'the old Gentleman' in 'Sense and Sensibility,' showed an exclusive care for his eldest grandson and heir, and, soon dying himself, left to his daughter-in-law the task of bringing up on small means her remaining five sons and a daughter. Without repining at her want of fortune, she quickly set to work to give them that which she thought would best supply its absence, namely, learning, and that they might receive a sound classical education, she removed to Sevenoaks, to send them as day-boys to its old Grammar School, and to take some of its masters as lodgers into her own house as an assistance towards defraying the expenses of her large family. She had her reward in living to see her daughter married and all her sons established in different professions. This brave woman was Jane Austen's great grandmother, as her fourth son, William, a surgeon in Tonbridge, became the father of George Austen—he being the first of the race to leave his native county and make a home in Hampshire.[1]

[1] Cf. *Chawton Manor and its Owners*, by William Austen-Leigh and Montagu George Knight, Chap. I. (Smith, Elder & Co.)

STEVENTON RECTORY (FRONT).

[12]

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When he was settled at Steventon, regular communications with the relations he had quitted in Kent were kept up. The Kentish Austens had, naturally, formed many connections by marriage with families in their own county, and when Jane, at the age of twelve, had for the first time the delight of going with her parents and her sister into Kent, she would make acquaintance with a number of relations hitherto unknown to her excepting by name—an epoch in life to a girl of that age, gifted with strong family instincts and quick power of observation. It is due to the correspondence maintained between the Hampshire and the Kentish cousins that various facts relating to the period of Jane Austen's girlhood were not long ago discovered by one of the authors of 'Life and Letters.'

None of these early letters were written by Jane herself, but in later life it was her custom to write many to relations at a distance, thus acting up to a remark she once made to a niece, 'I like cousins to be cousins, and interested in one another.'

This hereditary interest was also felt to the full towards the maternal side of the house, where the young George Austens'

descent was of an interesting and varied character. Mrs. George Austen had been Cassandra Leigh, one of the Leighs of Addlestrop in Gloucestershire, an elder branch of the Leighs of Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, to which property they succeeded when the junior line died out. All came from the family of Leighs, who were settled at Highleigh in Cheshire from the date of the Norman Conquest. Early in the reign of Henry VIII one of these, Thomas Leigh, came when a lad to seek his fortune in London. In this quest he was highly successful and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, being Lord Mayor of London in the year of her accession, 1557. As such he had the honour of receiving her and preceding her, carrying the sceptre before her Grace when she first entered the City to take up her residence at the Tower. He also bore a leading part in the ceremonies of her Coronation in the following year. Romantic incidents and stirring events belong to the history of Sir Thomas Leigh's descendants, who must have possessed much determination, strength of character, and keen sense of humour. They were also noted for inflexible loyalty to the

House of Stuart through every change of fortune that befell its monarchs. When Charles I was on his march to Nottingham, there to set up the Royal Standard, he found on reaching Coventry that the gates of that city were closed against him by order of the Mayor. On this he rode off to Stoneleigh Abbey, where he and his escort were hospitably received by the reigning Sir Thomas Leigh, a grandson of the original Sir Thomas. Again, in 1745 apartments were prepared in the Abbey which, it was hoped, that Charles Edward would occupy for at least one night; but he was not destined to enjoy such comfortable quarters in England, and very fortunate beyond a doubt was it for the Leighs that he retreated without reaching the midland counties. To Jane Austen, who was, as will be shown further on, a most worthy descendant of the 'loyal Leighs,' every story or relic connected with these historic memories of the Stuarts must have been deeply interesting, when she spent some time at Stoneleigh Abbey in August 1804; and greatly indeed would her delight have been increased could she have beheld a remarkable family treasure which the house

then contained, the very existence of which was at that time unknown, and so remained for another twenty years. It was in 1827 that Sir George Beaumont, well known as a connoisseur in art, when examining a flower-piece in oils at Stoneleigh Abbey, detected what appeared to be a human eye looking at him from amongst the flowers. On further examination it was ascertained that these had been thinly painted over another picture, and when they were removed a fine portrait of Charles I by Vandyke came to light. This method of concealment, adopted no doubt to save the picture from the thrust of some Parliamentary pikestaff, had proved so effectual that not even a tradition of the portrait had survived. It must have lain hidden for nearly two centuries until chance, as in the case of 'The Bride of the Mistletoe Bough,' revealed the long-kept secret, and the fine painting, happier in fortune than the ill-fated bride, emerged again in all its pristine beauty. Stuart monarchs have been accused of ingratitude towards their followers, but here, on the contrary, it is a pleasant, as well as a probable, theory that the portrait was sent to Sir Thomas Leigh in token of

the gratitude felt by a King who had been sheltered by him in a time of need.

It was through her Leigh relations that Jane became, while still young, well acquainted with Bath. Cassandra Austen's brother, James Leigh (Perrot), himself a man of good fortune, had married a well-endowed lady, Miss Cholmeley, from Lincolnshire. They possessed a country home in Berkshire, and had also, as a winter residence, a house in Bath, No. 1, Paragon, commanding a lovely and extensive view. There they lived as people of fashion and fortune in the later years of the eighteenth century, and parts of beautiful old costumes worn by them still exist to show how brilliant must have been the scenes then presented by the gay world of Bath. The Leigh Perrots, who were childless, received their Steventon relations as visitors, and the eldest of Cassandra's sons was generally looked upon as his uncle's natural heir.

Through circumstances which befel her next brother, Edward (Knight), Jane had again a fresh and a wide view of English society opened to her observation. Edward had been adopted, while still a young boy,

by another childless couple, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Knight, who were cousins on the Austen side of the house, and possessors of large properties both in Hampshire and in East Kent. It was in the latter neighbourhood that Edward married and settled, at first in a home of his own, whence he removed after Mr. Knight's death to the large house and beautiful estate of Godmersham Park, near Canterbury, and in East Kent, Jane, as a young woman, began to visit her brother Edward and his family. Visits, like the journeys that led to them, were in those days long affairs, and hers must have afforded ample time as well as opportunity to mix in the society of that neighbourhood, where she could observe English county life from a fresh point of view, and could compare it with the corresponding class of society she already knew well in Hampshire around Steventon. The share taken in the latter by the George Austens has been thus described by the author of the original 'Memoir.' He says: 'Their situation had some peculiar advantages beyond those of ordinary rectories. Steventon was a family living. Mr. Knight, the patron, was also proprietor

of nearly the whole parish. He never resided there and, consequently, the rector and his children came to be regarded in the neighbourhood as a kind of representatives of the family. They shared with the principal tenant the command of an excellent manor and enjoyed, in this reflected way, some of the consideration usually awarded to landed proprietors. They were not rich, but, aided by Mr. Austen's powers of teaching, they had enough to afford a good education to their sons and daughters, to mix in the best society in the neighbourhood, and to exercise a liberal hospitality to their own relations and friends. A carriage and pair of horses were kept. . . . The horses probably, like Mr. Bennet's, were often employed in farm work.'

From the foregoing account it will be evident that to place, as has been done by a recent critic, Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë together in one sentence, as both 'living aside from the world,' is entirely wide of the mark. Beyond the facts that their fathers were clergymen and that both lived in the country, no resemblance whatever can be discovered in their situations, which were as unlike as were their several

characters. No counterpart to the isolation and sadness of Haworth Rectory could be found in the happy and sociable atmosphere of the Rectory at Steventon. Her nephew, who well knew those of whom he wrote, says in his original 'Memoir': 'There can be no doubt that the general colouring of Jane Austen's early life was bright. She lived with indulgent parents in a cheerful home, which afforded an agreeable variety of society.' Jane, like most young girls, thoroughly enjoyed the gaieties of the neighbourhood around her, of which dancing formed a great feature. Her brother Henry says: 'She was fond of dancing and excelled in it.' It may be remembered that nearly all her heroines shared in this taste—even the timid Fanny feeling that a ball 'was indeed delightful.' That Jane Austen was in every way well fitted to write of the lives and feelings of English gentle-people is not to be questioned, nor that this would be a determining factor in directing her imagination towards such a field of work. It is not, however, a proof, as may be shown later, that there was none other at her command had she thought well to choose it.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION—I

CASSANDRA and Jane Austen, while still children, must have had a larger acquaintance with the world than can usually fall to the lot of such young girls. Space was probably needed within their own home for the reception of George Austen's pupils, and his little daughters, at the ages of nine and six, were sent to be educated elsewhere, not, as we are told, because it was supposed that Jane at six years old required very much education, but because it would have broken her heart to be separated from Cassandra. The sisters, therefore, went together to Oxford, there to be placed under the care of Mrs. Cawley, who was a connection of their mother and the widow of a Principal of Brasenose College; a lady of whom no record remains beyond the fact that she was a stiff-mannered person. Mrs. Cawley

removed after a time to Southampton, and by so doing very nearly put an end to Jane's short existence, for in that town both she and Cassandra fell very ill of what was then called 'putrid fever,' and Jane's life was at one time despaired of. Mrs. Cawley would not at first write word of this illness to Steventon Rectory, but Jane Cooper, the little girls' cousin, who was one of the party, thought it right to do so, an action which was probably instrumental in saving the life of Jane. Mrs. Austen at once set off for Southampton together with her sister, Mrs. Cooper, and they brought with them a remedy, to the use of which Jane's recovery was ascribed. But a heavy price had to be paid for this blessing. Poor Mrs. Cooper took the infection herself and died at Bath, whither she went on quitting Southampton. Such a tragical time must have remained fixed in any child's memory, and in the delirium and distress of Marianne Dashwood, when lying dangerously ill at Cleveland, also of a 'putrid fever,' and also awaiting the arrival of a mother, we probably hear an echo of poor little Jane's delirious entreaties for her own mother, when lying

equally ill in the strange world of Southampton.

The next experience of the sisters was of a happier nature. They and their cousin, Jane Cooper, spent two years in the kindly Abbey School at Reading, with its beautiful garden and picturesque old buildings. From all accounts, discipline here was not of a rigid order, for when their brother and cousin, Edward Austen and Edward Cooper, were passing through Reading Cassandra and the two Janes were allowed to dine with them at an inn in the town. A charming fancy drawing of this happy young party has been made by Miss Ellen Hill.[1] When, therefore, these early adventures in search of education came to an end and the sisters returned to continue their lessons at home, it must have been with imaginations already enriched by some acquaintance with the three old towns of Oxford, Southampton, and Reading.

At Steventon they would not suffer from any want of competent teachers. Basingstoke was near enough to furnish whatever

[1] *Jane Austen: her Homes and her Friends*, by Constance Hill. (J. Lane.)

occasional instructions might be needed from masters, such as Elizabeth Bennet told Lady Catherine could always be had at Longbourn for those who desired them. But the most valuable and solid part of their mental training they must have received in their own home, where they would find excellent opportunities for studying English literature and language under their father, who ceased by degrees to take private pupils into his house, and would, therefore, have sufficient leisure for teaching his own children. The recent critic who spoke of him as being probably 'not very much better educated, and scarcely more strenuous than his neighbours' makes an entire mistake. George Austen had won an open scholarship and fellowship at St. John's College, Oxford, and had been for a time a master at his own former school, Tonbridge, before returning again to reside at St. John's as an Oxford Don. In later life he prepared two of his sons for matriculation at the same College, and one of these has thus written of him, with especial reference to the education he gave to Jane. 'Being not only a profound Scholar, but possessing an exquisite taste in every species of Literature, it is not wonderful

STEVENTON RECTORY (BACK), 1814.

that his daughter Jane should at a very early age have become sensible of the charms of style and enthusiastic in the cultivation of her own language.' We may, perhaps, allow for a little filial exaggeration here, but we should also remember that it is first-hand evidence, coming from one of George Austen's own pupils. That he would be a kind and welcome instructor is certain from the way in which Jane afterwards recalls his strong affection for his family, his 'indescribable tenderness as a father,' and 'the sweet, benevolent smile which always distinguished him.' To learn of such a teacher must have been a constant pleasure, and she had another assistant at hand in her eldest brother James, himself a classical scholar and a cultivated man, of whom his son, the author of the original 'Memoir,' thus writes: 'He was well read in English literature, had a correct taste, and wrote readily and happily both in prose and verse. He was more than ten years older than Jane and had, I believe, a large share in directing her reading and forming her taste.' He was also a good French scholar, spending some months in France to perfect himself in the language.

Perhaps Jane remembered this brother's assistance when she made Edmund Bertram perform the same kind offices for his little cousin, Fanny Price.

One glimpse of Jane at her lessons has been spared to us by time and may be found in her own handwriting in an old copy of Oliver Goldsmith's 'History of England.' From internal evidence, she must have been reading it for the first time, with an excited interest that would recall Marianne Dashwood's enthusiastic soul rather than Catherine Morland's indifference to history, where she found 'the men all so bad, and hardly any women at all.' Jane's age can only be guessed at, but from the nature of the remarks she inscribes on the margin of this work, twelve or thirteen years seems a probable time of life for her to have then reached. It was the History of the Rebellion that stirred her loyal soul to its depths. At first she contents herself with these short interjections on the behaviour of Cromwell's party—

'Oh! Oh! The Wretches!'

but she grows eloquent when Goldsmith delivers his verdict against the whole family of Stuart, and cries out in answer—

'A family who were always ill-used, BETRAYED OR NEGLECTED, whose virtues are seldom allowed, while their errors are never forgotten.'

It is perhaps fortunate—in case some destructive critic should arise in the future to declare the improbability of Jane Austen having written any such words—that a postscript has been added to this note by a sympathetic young nephew, into whose possession the book afterwards passed: 'Bravo, Aunt Jane! Just my opinion of the case.'

At the conclusion of Walpole's speech her remark is slightly ironical—

'Nobly said! Spoken like a Tory!'

And, again, when Goldsmith refers to the King as a Master unworthy of faithful followers, come these words—

'Unworthy, because he was a Stuart, I suppose—unhappy family!'

Lord Balmerino's execution in 1745 is thus lamented—

'Dear Balmerino! I cannot express what I feel for you!'

On the subsequent change in the dress of the Highlanders she writes—

'I do not like this. Every ancient custom

ought to be Sacred, unless it is prejudicial to Happiness.'

Next comes a very sapient announcement. Goldsmith having condemned those who were 'Stunning mankind with a cry of Freedom,' Jane thus addresses him—

'*My Dear Mr. G—, I have lived long enough in the world to know that it is always so.*'

Here she was probably thinking of the French Revolution, in which all at Steventon had a special reason for taking very deep interest.

She did not approve of Anne leaving her father's cause to side with her brother-in-law, and, being unwilling to blame any Stuart, finds her own way out of the dilemma—

'*Anne should not have done so, indeed I do not believe she did.*'

In writing of James II's obstinate adherence to his own policy, Goldsmith refers it to this King's conviction that 'nothing could injure schemes calculated to promote the cause of heaven,' on which Jane observes—

'*Since he acted upon such motives he ought not to be blamed.*'

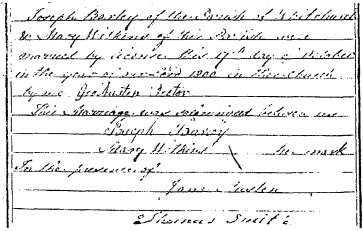
It must be left to those critics who have described Jane Austen's disposition as 'calm',

as ' unemotional,' ' unsentimental,' ' passionless,' to reconcile such epithets with these eager outpourings, which are given here for the benefit of all who may care to form some truer conception of the real Jane than the tame and colourless personality, devoid of all enthusiasm and ardour, which has at times been set before the public as hers, though something better than this might, one would think, have been divined from the characters of her favourite heroines, Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet, neither of whom can well be decried as wanting in high spirit or liveliness of nature.

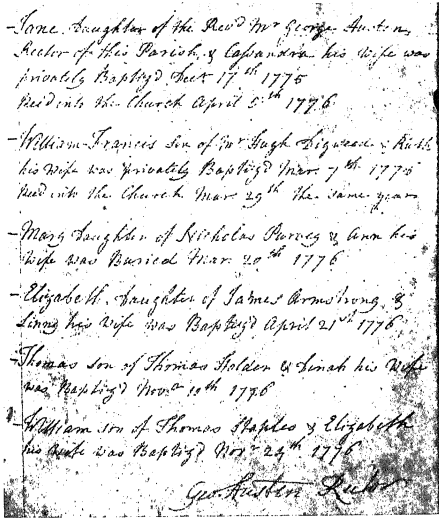
Of Jane's accomplishments in music and drawing we know little more than can be found in her brother's notice. He says: ' She had not only an excellent taste for drawing, but in her earlier days evinced great power of hand in the management of the pencil. She was a warm and judicious admirer of landscape, both in nature and on canvas. At a very early age she was enamoured of Gilpin on the Picturesque, and she seldom changed her opinion either on books or men.' None of her efforts in drawing have survived, though a few of

Cassandra's slight water-colour portraits still exist, and also some pencil sketches taken by others of the family, showing that a general love of drawing existed amongst them, in which Jane very probably shared. Her delight in beautiful scenery was so great that she thought it must hereafter form one of the joys of heaven. As regards music, her brother says she 'held her own musical attainments extremely cheap.' They were, of course, not remarkable, but she was the most musical of an unmusical family, and a niece, when writing of her, says she had a natural taste for music. A manuscript music book of hers is still preserved at Chawton, containing, in exquisitely fine writing, some of the songs she used to sing.

How large a share Mrs. Austen may have taken in the intellectual part of her daughters' education we do not know, but she may no doubt be credited with the charge of two important departments—writing and needlework. She herself wrote an admirable hand, both powerful and interesting, rivalling, though not much resembling, that of her daughter Jane, the beauty of whose writing many of her readers know. Jane herself



Joseph Barsley of this Parish & Widower
& Mary Wilkins of this Parish were
married by Licence this 17th day of October
in the year one thousand 1800 in this Church
by me Geo. Austen Rector
This Marriage was solemnized between us
Joseph Barsley
Mary M. Wilkins her mark
In the presence of
Jane Austen
Thomas Swift



- Jane Daughter of the Revd Mr George Austen Rector of this Parish & Cassandra his Wife was privately Baptized June 17th 1775 Received into the Church April 5th 1776
- William Francis Son of Mr Hugh Digweed & Ruth his Wife was privately Baptized March 7th 1775 Received into the Church March 29th the same year
- Mary Daughter of Nicholas Barsley & Ann his Wife was Buried March 29th 1776
- Elizabeth Daughter of James Armstrong & Susan his Wife was Baptized April 21st 1776
- Thomas Son of Thomas Holder & Sarah his Wife was Baptized Novr 19th 1776
- William Son of Thomas Staples & Elizabeth his Wife was Baptized Novr 24th 1776

Geo. Austen Rector

1. Written out by Jane Austen and signed by her Father, 1800.
2. Written out and signed by her Father, 1776.

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looked upon good handwriting as an art to be carefully cultivated. She alludes to it more than once in her notes to a little niece, Caroline Austen, and of her nephew Edward Austen's writing she says: 'I am quite happy to see how his hand is improving. I am convinced that it will end in a very gentlemanlike hand, much above Par.' Good writing was general in Jane's home, and those who study caligraphy as a key to character might be interested by finding signs of imagination, grace of mind, and other pleasant qualities repeated in the various scripts.

Good needlework was in their time an accomplishment of great importance in every household, and this their mother would certainly teach them, for she was herself a proficient in it even to the close of a very long life, and her daughters were her imitators. The only time Jane ever bestows *serious* praise upon a performance of her own is when she writes word from Rowling, her brother Edward's first home in Kent, that they are 'all very busy making shirts, and I am proud to say that I am the neatest worker of the party.' No one who has seen the specimens of her needlework

which still exist can doubt that the praise was well deserved. One of these, which looks as if it were fashioned by fairy fingers, is a tiny housewife containing needles an inch in length, made for a friend by Jane at the age of seventeen. Another, belonging to later years, is a scarf of Indian muslin, two and a half yards long, embroidered throughout in white satin stitch, its delicate beauty being unmarred by a single fault.[1] Equally industrious was she in humbler tasks. Her niece Anna has written of her aunts as constantly sitting together, making clothes for the poor, and varying their occupation by here and there teaching a boy or girl to read, Jane very probably instructing a god-daughter of her own, whose father was coachman to her brother James Austen.[2]

Let those who have done the same declare whether this shows any interest in their poorer neighbours or not! Yet a foreign

[1] The pattern of this scarf has been produced on the covers of Miss Hill's book, and also been carved on the oaken margin surrounding the tablet which was erected through their exertions on the wall of Chawton Cottage, in 1917, to commemorate the Centenary of Jane Austen's death.

[2] See Miss Hill's book, Chap. I.

admirer of her works has not hesitated to charge her with indifference to the needs of the poor, with visiting them as seldom as possible, and with never doubting that they had been created in order that they might serve and respect 'their betters,' adding 'Grief and poverty shock her, as offensive to her taste, things which she forgets as quickly as possible,' and 'she always turns away from suffering, sadness, and ugliness.' Of such a character could it ever have been said that 'to know her was to love her?' The only train of thought in this critic's mind appears to be, 'She did not write of the poor, and therefore she did not care for them.' Jane has, however, left an unconscious contradiction of such imputations on the margin of her Goldsmith, who in one place has described the extreme destitution of the poorer classes after the Revolution, in consequence of which a man and his wife committed suicide. On this her comment is ready—

'*How much are the poor to be pitied, and the Rich to be Blamed!*'

The baseless accusation that she always turned away from whatever was sad,

unpleasant, or painful, cannot be allowed
pass unnoticed. One simple instance to the co
trary (among many) is described in a fam
letter. During their residence at Chawt
Cottage a general outbreak of measles to
place among the Frank Austens, who we
at the time inhabiting the Great House.
some relief to the overworked nurses
the House, Miss Gibson, a sister of M
Frank Austen, who was one of the part
was invited over to the Cottage to ha
her attack of measles there, and Mrs. Auste
in a letter to her grand-daughter Anna, th
sums up the result: 'She wanted a gre
deal of good nursing, and a great deal
good nursing she had,' the nurses bei
Cassandra, Jane, and their friend Mart
Lloyd. Anna, when recording this incide
merely adds: 'It was their quiet way
doing great kindnesses.' Jane's powers
a nurse were more severely tried some yea
later when for many weeks she attended
her brother Henry in an illness in Lond
of which he nearly died.

In returning to the question of ear
education, it must be pointed out that
the acquisition of foreign languages t

daughters of Steventon Rectory were unusually fortunate, often having an excellent teacher of the same resident for long periods together under its hospitable roof. This was their own first cousin on the paternal side, the Comtesse de Feuillide, Elizabeth Hancock by birth, who in later life became their sister-in-law. She was greatly attached to the family at Steventon, especially to her Uncle George, and she with her mother spent much time at the Rectory before she was taken by the latter to finish her education in Paris, where in 1781 she married a French nobleman, Jean Capotte Comte de Feuillide. She was a lovely and accomplished young woman, who went out much into gay and high society both in Paris and in London. Her husband's estates were situated in the south of France, and thither she at one time travelled, making in the course of the summer an expedition across the Pyrenees to take part in the gaieties of the beautiful watering place, Bagnéres de Bigorre, on their further side. The affectionate and regular correspondence she maintained with her English relations does not seem to have been diminished by these

foreign experiences, and when political thunderclouds gathered over France the Comte dispatched her, with her infant son, to England, to find a safe refuge in Steventon Rectory, where she frequently resided in the dark days that were to follow, both before and after the unfortunate Comte perished on the scaffold in February, 1794.

It was probably in part to Elizabeth that her younger cousins owed their easy familiarity with the French language, and also some knowledge of Italian; as much, we may suppose, as Anne Elliot owns to in 'Persuasion.' Whatever the amount may have been, Jane was tolerably certain, like Anne, to have decried, as far as possible, her own personal share in it. But when she describes herself, long afterwards, to Mr. Clarke, the Regent's Librarian, as one who 'knows only her mother tongue and has read little in that,' and as 'the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress,' she is indulging in a flight of fancy and self-depreciation unusual even for her. It may have formed the foundation for a strange statement made by a modern critic that 'if she was fond of

reading, she knew nothing about literature. Her letters do not suggest the uneasiness attached to the possession of a soul—as we moderns understand it.' The connection of these sentences is not very easy to follow, as a large number of persons who certainly know nothing of literature still believe themselves to possess 'a soul,' as that word is usually understood. But the 'modern soul' appears to belong to some distinct order of its own, and thankful may we be that Jane Austen did not possess its 'uneasiness,' for had she done so, we could never have possessed works such as those she has left to the world. Once more, respecting her knowledge of literature, neither here, nor on any similar occasion, is she to be taken at her own valuation. Not only was this honestly a low one, but it suited her playful turn of mind to describe her attainments (excepting in needlework) as even lower than she believed them to be. Thus, when assuring Mr. Clarke of her inability to produce a romance on the whole House of Coburg, the spirit of nonsense evidently rose up within her at the idea, making her add that if, on pain of death, she were forbidden to

laugh at herself or other people, she would certainly be hung before she had finished the first chapter. Mr. Clarke may or may not have been capable of a smile here—it must remain doubtful—for there have evidently been other persons of a later date quite unable to perceive when the writer is indulging in the welcome luxury of a pleasant little jest against herself. Her brother's account is altogether different. He says: 'Her reading was very extensive in history and belles-lettres, and her memory extremely tenacious. Her favourite moral writers were Johnson in prose, and Cowper in verse. It is difficult to say at what age she was not intimately acquainted with the merits and defects of the best essays and novels in the English language.'

The predominance given to Crabbe amongst Jane Austen's favourite writers by various annotators is rather singular. It has been due to her joke against herself, preserved by family tradition, and mentioned in the original 'Memoir,' that 'she thought she could fancy marrying Mr. Crabbe,' and on the certain knowledge that she enjoyed his works. But this was no exclusive enjoy-

ment, and he has no place among the poets, passages from whose works appear in connection with her own heroines. Of these there are a considerable number. Cowper was read by Marianne Dashwood and Fanny Price, the former declaring that his 'beautiful lines have frequently driven me almost mad.' Anne Elliot studied and discussed Scott and Byron, and in the laughing choice of passages from the poets supposed to have assisted in developing Catherine Morland's mind, Pope, Gray, Thomson, and Shakespeare have a place. 'Hamlet' was read aloud in Mrs. Dashwood's drawing-room, and Henry Crawford assumes that a knowledge of Shakespeare is instinctively imbibed from the atmosphere of every educated household. A fairly wide acquaintance with English poets is thus incidentally shown by her writings, but of Crabbe we only hear that his 'Tales' lay among the books on Fanny Price's table.

A pleasant picture of the home circle to which Jane belonged while still a child, as it appeared to a visitor in the house, exists in a family manuscript, written by a Mrs. Thomas Leigh, who speaks of her cousin

Cassandra as being the wife of 'the truly respectable Mr. Austen,' and says: 'With his sons (all promising to make figures in life) Mr. Austen educates a few youths of chosen friends and acquaintances. When among this Liberal Society, the simplicity, hospitality, and taste which commonly prevail in different families among the delightful valleys of Switzerland ever occurs to my memory.' [1]

[1] *An Old Family History*, by the Hon. Agnes Leigh, *National Review*, April, 1907.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION—II

THE general love of literature that prevailed in Steventon Rectory is a sufficient security that Jane could not suffer from any intellectual poverty in her home. In the broader aspects of the word 'education,' she was also fortunately placed. The thoughts of her family were bounded by no narrow horizon. They had private as well as public reasons for taking a deep interest in important matters then agitating the nation at large. While Jane was still quite young the elders of the family could not, if they would, have refrained from following with close attention the great political drama being played out at that time in another hemisphere. The then very far off land of India was brought near to them, and they were familiarised with many details of Indian life through the marriage of George Austen's

only surviving sister, Philadelphia, to Saul Tysoe Hancock. Mr. Hancock had been a companion and early friend of Warren Hastings before his own marriage took place at Calcutta, and after that event he and Philadelphia lived on terms of close intimacy with Hastings, who became god-father to their only child, Elizabeth. His own only child had been placed with the George Austens, and to their great grief had died as a young boy when still under their care. Intercourse between Steventon and Calcutta remained, nevertheless, unbroken; the trial of Warren Hastings was followed with the deepest interest at the Rectory, and when the impeachment of the latter (begun in 1788) was concluded by an acquittal in 1795, great were the joy and exultation felt by his friends in Hampshire.

Of the letters that must have passed on the occasion only one is extant, coming from the fluent pen of young Henry Austen, who addresses Hastings with respectful devotion and celebrates the great event in many magnificent phrases. Jane, who was twenty years old in December, 1795, would have heard much of Warren Hastings all

her life, and cannot have failed to take a part in the excitement and enthusiasm felt by the whole family. Neither was India the only foreign land with which the George Austens were personally concerned. The troubles already arising in distracted France must have claimed an even greater share of their anxious attention, since they so closely affected their own nearest relations. Many must have been the stories, both gay and grievous, told by the young Comtesse and her mother on their return to Steventon, of life in the French capital at that thrilling crisis, mixed with descriptions of French château life in the south, and accounts of the gaieties of the fashionable world of Paris at the court of Louis XVI. Another view of foreign society would also reach the George Austens through their son, Edward, who, having been when a young man entirely adopted by the Thomas Knights, was sent by them, not to a University, but to make the then fashionable 'Grand Tour of Europe.' In his case this included a year spent in Dresden, where he was kindly received at the Saxon court. Many years afterwards, when his two eldest sons had

spent some time in that city and had, like their father, received marks of attention from the Royal Family, there was a pleasant exchange of letters and presents between Prince Maximilian of Saxony and 'Edward Knight, *ci-devant* Austen.' The educational tour of the latter was afterwards extended to Rome.[1] Its date was probably 1786–88, and it comprehended a view of that old Europe soon to be changed by the convulsion of wars and revolutions. Edward, on his return home, would have much to relate of deep interest at Godmersham and Steventon; Jane being at this period twelve or thirteen years old.

Nor should it be forgotten that while every intelligent and patriotic Englishman must have been following the events in the British fleet with unbroken interest, the Steventon party had a double reason for so doing, since two of George Austen's sons were beginning their careers and hazarding their lives in those naval actions upon the success of which the safety of the whole nation depended.

We see, then, that at Steventon Rectory an ample supply of food for the mind, the

[1] Cf. *Chawton Manor and its Owners*, Chap. VII, p. 158.

heart, and the imagination was furnished both by public events and by private interests, and some expressions used by Jane in later years show that the girl of twelve or thirteen, whose comments on the course of English history, occurring a century or more before her own birth, we have been reading, remained to the end of her life a firm patriot and a strong believer in the superiority in the ways and the merits of her native country over those of other lands. In a letter written to an old friend a few months before her death, she says: 'I hope your letters from abroad are satisfactory. They would not be satisfactory to *me* I confess, unless they breathed a strong spirit of regret for not being in England.' Yet critics have arisen, ready to accuse her of possessing only narrow sympathies and little patriotism, on the sole ground that no discussions on public affairs, or on the war with France, appear in her private, intimate correspondence with her sister Cassandra. Here we have once more the old cry 'She did not write of them, *therefore* she did not care for them.' The falseness of such an argument, when it attacks a belief in the

kindness of Jane Austen's heart has, it is hoped, been already shown—but the second charge, if somewhat less offensive, stands on no securer foundation than the first. Why *should* she write of public affairs unless their sailor brothers' personal histories were at the moment affected by them? Then indeed her pen is always active; but on public issues let us judge her by ourselves. Our war of five years' duration is just over; how many sisters, when a lapse of two or three years had familiarised them with the thought of its existence would have discussed it, in its public bearings, in letters to each other devoted to home details? Yet might they not justly resent an imputation that the absence of such discussions proved any want of ardent patriotism on their own parts? But to Jane Austen, war, far from being a new and unheard of horror, was an almost normal state of things. *Her* England had during a large portion of her short life been constantly at war. The gravity of the situation could never be forgotten, but the recent excitement of our own country, fed as it has been by telegrams and journalists, did not exist a hundred years

earlier, when intelligence of great battles was often long in reaching England. Such news might take weeks on its journey, and private information was still longer on the passage home. Francis Austen was made a post captain in consequence of gallantry shewn in a naval action in the Mediterranean, but he did not hear of his promotion until six months after the action had been fought, the necessary details having taken three months to travel home to England, while another period of three months was required to bring news of such promotion back to himself.

Nor is it accurate to say that Jane makes no mention of the war to Cassandra; it is referred to more than once, even in the few fragments of her letters that we possess. One passage may be cited, and also interpreted, to exculpate the writer from any apparent want of feeling on account of the words she employs: 'May 21, 1811. How horrible to have so many people killed! And what a blessing that one cares for none of them!' The action here alluded to is no doubt Albuera—a very bloody battle, and among the regiments which suffered most was that of the 'Buffs' from East Kent. It is prob-

able that this contained some Godmersham friends and that the object of her remark was to express satisfaction that none of them were among the dead.

Considerations such as these may, perhaps, have some weight in causing critics to hesitate before accusing Jane Austen, on negative evidence only, of narrow sympathies, or any other deficiency. There is also a further reflection which might have checked any writer in drawing conclusions from such of her letters as have been published, but it is one from which the bulk of her commentators turn away, being apparently reluctant to accept the plain account given by a member of her own family, to whom all the attendant circumstances of the occurrence he relates were perfectly well known. Once more let a most important fact, already referred to in a previous chapter, be stated; this being, not merely that the great mass of Jane's letters were destroyed by Cassandra, but that she kept *only* those which she considered so totally devoid of general interest that it was impossible anyone should, at any time, contemplate their publication. These she bequeathed to her niece, Lady

Knatchbull, whose attachment to her Aunt Jane had, she knew, been so intense that letters however trifling would be loved by her even for the sake of the handwriting alone. Not only, therefore, in quantity, but —which is far more important—in quality, these letters are entirely unworthy specimens of her correspondence in general. They are but 'a gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done'—when all that was precious had been safely gathered up, and garnered in Cassandra's faithful memory, and nothing had been left behind excepting that which even she deemed to be altogether negligible. How vain, then, must be any attempt to extract from this unvalued remainder that wine of the spirit with which all the spontaneous and uncensored works of Jane Austen's imaginative soul are richly filled!

The mistake already referred to made by a recent writer, relating rather to her family than herself, must be once more noticed, as it concerns the subject of her education. Being, as it would seem, unaware of the considerable amount of learning possessed by Jane's father, and passed on by him to his children, he pities her for a want

of 'culture' in her own home, together with the lack of opportunities by which she might have 'sought for its consolations' in some larger sphere. He asserts without hesitation that her life must have been 'in a measure isolated, from superiority. She gave more than she received. Nor can we believe her entirely unconscious of what life might have yielded her in more equal companionship.' That 'the highest mounted minds' are compelled to fulfil their separate missions in noble solitude, is no doubt true. Eminent pioneers of abstract intellectual effort must necessarily be in advance of other minds—

'Voyaging through strange seas of thought
Alone for ever.'

So is it also in the world of imagination. Every possessor of true creative genius, having received his separate inspiration, must as an artist dwell alone with his work, in which no other human being can claim a share. But this is a totally distinct thing from the isolation here declared to have been experienced by Jane Austen in daily life, because she had an unavoidable sense of

mental superiority to all her companions. Nothing can be more opposed to every family record and all inherited knowledge than such a conjecture as this. Far from deeming herself to be the intellectual superior of those around her, she sincerely believed to the end of her days that her sister was much wiser and better informed than herself. Her brother Henry writes : ' She had an invincible distrust of her own judgment.' ' She shrank from notoriety.' ' No accumulation of fame would have induced her had she lived to affix her name to any productions of her pen.' To imagine Jane Austen appearing as an authoress in any literary circle, in ' search of the consolations of culture ' is indeed a strange idea, as unimaginable to later generations of her family as it would have been to her own. To live quietly at home and remain unknown as a writer of fiction, was her great wish, and the secret was carefully kept by all her relations until it was at length revealed by the irrepressible Henry himself. Her thoughts and words on this occurrence are already recorded, and they are like herself.[1] So also are the

[1] *Life and Letters*, Chap. XVI, p. 281.

only regrets she ever expressed regarding shortcomings in education to be found in her home, these being directed entirely against herself, and not at all against other people. She 'wished she had written less and read more before the age of sixteen.' Her father's library must have contained books amply sufficient for the purpose, as, when quitting Steventon, he left five hundred volumes to be sold, in addition to those he may have taken away with him. Jane also had to dispose of her own modest collection of books, which was sold for eleven pounds. In respect to her own characteristic self-criticism, we may remember that book-learning does not form the whole of education, and that the facility for writing clear English, which by a constant use of the pen she acquired very early in life, together with the formation of a humorous style, were to prove in her case invaluable attainments. All the family could write light, amusing trifles in verse,[1] some of which had considerable merit, and Jane's childish absurdities with their solemn dedications to one or other of the party would, no doubt, be well received

[1] Cf. Appendix, 'Charades.'

as the kind of productions naturally to be expected from a droll and merry little sister. When the character of her writings changed with advancing years, and they became secrets not lightly to be revealed to critics downstairs, she was equally fortunate in the possession of one favourite and favoured listener. A genial atmosphere of warm and encouraging sympathy is much needed to foster the developing shoots of romantic authorship, and of this she was secure in the companionship of Cassandra, who, while able to form and maintain opinions of her own, felt the strongest possible admiration and enthusiasm for her sister's works. One of their nieces, writing in 1856, speaks of having met 'a most ardent and enthusiastic lover of Aunt Jane's novels,' and adds: '*Aunt Cassandra herself would be satisfied at her appreciation of them;* nothing ever like them, before or since.' This niece's brother, the first Lord Brabourne, who was sixteen when Cassandra Austen died in 1845, has thus written of her: 'From my recollections of "Great Aunt Cassandra," in her latter days, she must have been a very sensible, charming, and agreeable person.'

Had she been less than this she could hardly have filled Jane's sisterly heart with such absolute satisfaction, respect, and admiration as we know to have been the case, and if further testimony to the strength and beauty of Cassandra's character is needed, it may be found in the letters written by Cassandra herself, immediately after Jane's death, to their niece, Fanny Knight.[1]

No sense of isolation or unfulfilled longings can have troubled Jane's soul when she had Cassandra beside her, and another and an older friend for whom she felt intense love and reverence was also constantly at hand. This was Mrs. Lefroy, of Ashe Rectory, always known in Ashe parish, which bordered on that of Steventon and Deane, as 'Madam Lefroy.' The author of the original 'Memoir' thus describes her: 'She was a remarkable person. Her rare endowments of goodness, talents, graceful person, and engaging manners were sufficient to secure her a prominent place in any society into which she was thrown; while her enthusiastic eagerness of disposition rendered her especially attractive to a clever and lively girl.' The notice

[1] *Life and Letters*, Chap XXI.

and encouragement which Mrs. Lefroy bestowed upon Jane from her childhood shows her to have possessed quick powers of discernment, and great was Jane's grief when this beloved friend died suddenly, in consequence of a fall from her horse, in 1804. With so perfect an example of good breeding always before her eyes, and living continually in the midst of a family whose manners and bearing towards each other always struck the next generation as particularly pleasant and harmonious, with the addition moreover of any information the Comtesse might occasionally impart concerning what Sir William Lucas would have termed 'the manners of the great,' Jane could have no difficulty in learning how to observe and appreciate in the world at large those various shades of good breeding, or of its opposite, which appear again and again in characters scattered throughout her books. In one of the most sympathetic and correct of the shorter works dealing with Jane Austen that have been published in recent years, the author has inserted all the correspondence that passed between Mrs. Thomas Knight and young Edward Austen who was

to succeed her late husband at Godmersham Park. A portion of this appears in 'Life and Letters,' Chap. VI, while the whole of it is of so charming a character that every letter would repay perusal.[1]

On these letters Mr. Pollock makes the following remarks: 'Comment has often been made, and most justly made, on the perfect breeding and manners of those people in Miss Austen's novels who are supposed and intended to be well bred. The object in quoting these letters is to show in what a perfect atmosphere of dignity and good feeling Miss Austen passed her life. There is surely something singularly touching in the sincere affection and the delightful courtesy of this correspondence, and it is certainly most characteristic of the race to which Miss Austen belonged.' The writer, as a resident at Chawton, had enjoyed the friendship of the late owner of Chawton House, Montagu George Knight, Squire of Chawton Manor, and no one who was so happy as to know him can ever have doubted that in courtesy, in charm of personality and

[1] *Jane Austen: Her Contemporaries and Herself*, by Walter Herries Pollock. (Longmans & Green.)

CHAWTON HOUSE.

manner, combined with an unfailing kindness of heart, he might well have served as a model for the highest ideals of his great aunt, Jane Austen.

In returning to the subject of Jane's education, and taking that word in an extended sense, one characteristic of the family life around her ought not to be overlooked, namely, the strong hereditary love of sport to be found among its members. George Austen must have received it from his Kentish ancestors, for he certainly transmitted it to his descendants, even of a third and fourth generation. All his own boys hunted at an early age on anything they could get hold of, and Jane when five or six must often have gazed with admiring, if not envious, eyes at her next oldest brother, Frank, setting off for the hunting field at the ripe age of seven, on his bright chestnut pony Squirrel (bought by himself for £1 12*s*.), dressed in the suit of scarlet cloth made for him from a riding habit which had formed part of his mother's wedding outfit. Such early remembrances would be of real advantage to a future novelist, and in the cursory references to sport occurring in her books we

feel that she is perfectly at home in all branches of the subject, and could readily enter into the feelings of Sir John Middleton and Charles Musgrove towards the precious fox or the pernicious rat. Nor is it impossible that she was indulging in a secret smile, born of remembrance, when Mrs. Jennings exclaims, 'ʼTis a sad thing for sportsmen to lose a day's pleasure, poor souls! I always pity them when they do—they seem to take it so much to heart.'

When the foregoing statements as to Jane Austen's home, education, and intercourse with society are considered, they will, it is hoped, put an end to any surprise that she was so well able to paint the lives of the English gentry, as well as to every surmise that she took this class for her subject because she had no knowledge of anything beyond it. So far as varied reading, first-hand evidence, and strong personal interest can teach us, she was probably better acquainted with other interesting phases of life than many young English women of the same period, age, and station. That any surprise at her choice of this, for her, most natural field of work should be felt, is itself the

surprising thing. No one wonders that Miss Edgeworth wrote of Ireland, or Sir Walter Scott of Scotland. Jane Austen was intensely English, by birth and by sympathies. England she loved and of England she wrote; finding her happiness and interest in the lives of those around her. She might, no doubt, have indulged in romantic flights of fancy with India or France for a background, and filled them with fictitious delights such as were to be found in the fairy tales with which she enchanted her little nieces during their happy visits to Chawton Cottage, but this would have been play work—and her books were to be solid pieces of real work, carefully designed and constructed, polished also with the utmost skill and patience before they could reach the high standard of original invention joined to entire accuracy in minute particulars, which she appears always to have set before herself. In no foreign field of work could she have exhibited that intimate acquaintance with every aspect and detail which her own scrupulous judgment demanded. Vagueness of method, or inaccuracy in particulars, her taste would have condemned as destructive

of the true object to be aimed at in fiction. Never having left England herself, she never attempts to convey her characters across the sea, and in one of her letters she warns a young niece who was beginning to compose stories against committing this mistake. Her standard as to the right method by which to captivate the reader's attention and transport him to another world, at once imaginary and real, remains firmly fixed, and the manner in which she attained it affords, as has been well said in another connection, 'an instance of that patient elaboration to which the highest effects in art are due.' Such results can only be obtained where a complete knowledge of the actual goes hand-in-hand with a clear vision of the ideal. Nothing less than first-hand, personal knowledge could satisfy the thoroughness of Jane Austen's nature, or enable her to fulfil, to the utmost of her ability, the imperative requirements of her creative art.

Another highly valuable, and only too rare gift, which she possessed must not be left unmentioned, as it was one in which education bore a share, for 'Nature and

Art both joined' to make her a delightful and accomplished reader aloud. Her brother Henry writes: 'Her voice was extremely sweet. She read aloud with very great taste and effect. Her own works were probably never heard to so much advantage as from her own mouth, for she partook largely in all the best gifts of the comic muse.' It may be remembered that when her mother began to read 'Pride and Prejudice' aloud on its first arrival from London, Jane could not repress a secret regret that she read it too fast, and did not always make the characters 'speak as they should do.' But her own aspirations were high, for as regarded the stage itself she owns, 'Acting seldom satisfies me. I think I want something more than can be.'

Her nephew and first biographer often formed part of the family party to whom she would read her novels aloud, and as he also was endowed with a charming voice and excellent taste, the few survivors among the many of those who in former years listened to his reading can still believe that they have, through him, heard the tones and the manner in which Jane Austen was

accustomed to make her characters 'speak as they should do.' Nor did she read from her own writings alone. One of her hearers wrote, as an old man in 1870: 'She was a very sweet reader. I last heard her when she was on a visit to Steventon. She had finished the first canto of 'Marmion' and had begun the second, when a visitor was announced. It was like the interruption of some pleasing dream, the illusions of which suddenly vanished.'

Nothing has hitherto been said concerning the most important part of the education Jane Austen received in her home—her moral and religious training. It will be found that this is dealt with in the course of the following chapter.

CHAPTER V[1]

MORALITY

WAS Jane Austen a Moralist? 'No! many of her fervent admirers will exclaim—'Thank Heaven—that she was *not!*' Her mission was to amuse, to delight, to refresh us—but neither to reprove nor to condemn us! Those who want 'Moral Tales' must seek them elsewhere; they are not to be found among Jane Austen's writings! They are not, indeed, if to be moral is to be dull, and if no one can instruct without growing tedious. Far, far away from such odious reproaches must those pages for ever shine to which we turn again and again, as beguilers of trouble and companions in mirth, equally welcome in society or solitude, in sickness or health, in early life or in advancing years. They even seem to grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength, for old though

[1] Reprinted by permission from the *Quarterly Review* for October, 1919.

we may be, and wise as we may think ourselves, we never outgrow their freshness or their wisdom. Such is the creed of Jane Austen's earnest adherents. Nor is this all. In addition to the unflagging interest taken in her books by successive generations of readers, a separate interest has grown up in the hearts of many. For them to know her books—in some cases almost by heart—is much, but it is not enough. They desire to know herself also, they seek after a more intimate acquaintance with their unseen lifelong friend, Jane Austen, who, more than one hundred years ago, was laid to rest, early on a summer morning, within the walls of Winchester Cathedral.

The existence of such a feeling came to light as soon as the original 'Memoir of Jane Austen,' already mentioned, was published in 1869 by her nephew, the Rev. J. E. Austen-Leigh.[1] When this book appeared, a singular change took place. It not only brought into being a large number of articles, notices, and reviews concerning its subject and her works, but it also brought to himself a variety of interesting letters from unknown corre-

[1] See Chapter I, p. 3.

spondents, both English and American, describing the effect that its perusal had produced upon the writers' minds. These letters afforded him much pleasure and not a little surprise. Until that period he had not realised to how large a number of readers, and in what a high degree, the Aunt to whom he as a boy and young man had been so warmly attached, had also become a living, though an unseen, friend.

An extract from one of the letters may be given to serve as a specimen of many others : 'Your Memoir has but one drawback—it leaves us with a sad craving for more . . . much as we loved and honoured her before, we love and honour her the more for what you have told us of her, and in the name of my Grandfather, Father, Uncles and Aunts, Cousins and Children, I thank you for your book.'

Words such as these showed that it was not only as an author but as a woman that Jane Austen had made her way into the affections of many readers. Entreaties also arrived that any stories, or fragments of stories, left by her in manuscript might be published, one correspondent urging that

'Every line from the pen of Jane Austen is precious.' In response to these warmhearted applications, the writer of the 'Memoir' could do little beyond attending to the last-mentioned request. Having obtained the necessary permission from those members of his family to whom the original manuscripts had been bequeathed by Jane's sister, Cassandra, he included in the second edition of his 'Memoir' 'Lady Susan,' 'The Watsons,' the alternative ending of 'Persuasion,' and some of her childish writings. The reasons why it was impossible for him at the time to do more than this have been already stated—and mention has been made of books subsequently put forth by other members of Jane Austen's family, containing fresh information regarding the external aspects of her history which may in some degree have fulfilled the wishes of the eagerly enquiring readers of the original 'Memoir.'

But though gratified, they may not be wholly satisfied. They may still desire a more intimate acquaintance with her inner self, with those hidden recesses of feeling concerning which a delicate reserve impelled her to keep a very sacred silence. They

long for a sight of the vanished
rs, not from idle curiosity, but that,
he words already recorded, 'Much as
loved and honoured her before, they
t learn to love and honour her still more.'
atural but a vain wish! The letters
shed long ago—sacrificed by Cassandra
n offering of love and reverence to the
ory of a sister unspeakably dear to
elf.

Yet though in this way we can learn
ing, there is another path, hitherto, we
ve, untrodden, by the help of which
may attain a point of view affording us
e fresh knowledge respecting those inner
rictions Jane Austen was always slow
evealing to the public gaze, and which
at the same time offer a reason for the
stion at the beginning of this chapter.
accomplish such an object we must turn
er books and reverse our usual attitude
nind towards them by considering each
y, not as a separate creation, but as
of a general whole. From an artistic
dpoint there is nothing that can tempt
o act in this manner. Every novel is
plete in itself, possessing its own plot,

characters, and distinctive atmosphere in a remarkable degree. We find scarcely any repetition of ideas among the six, and this may induce the belief that while comparison is easy, combination is impossible, as they possess no similarity among themselves apart from the creative, dramatic, humorous qualities common to all. This is our first, and not unnatural, conclusion. Nevertheless it will be seen on reflection that there is one feature which declares their family likeness. There is one line of thought, one grace, or quality, or necessity, whichever title we like to know it by, apparent in all her works. Its name is—Repentance.

It will be found on examination that this incident recurs in all her novels, neither being dragged in as a moral nor dwelt upon as a duty, but quietly taking its place as a natural and indispensable part of the plot—as an inevitable incident in the formation and development of each successive child of her imagination. Every one, gayer or graver as the case may be, has its own testimony to give on this question, while all display the skill with which the author knew how to handle the subject according

to the varying needs of place, character, and surroundings. We shall find that it could not be dispensed with, even in her very early and most lighthearted story, 'Northanger Abbey.' Here the young heroine, under the excitement of wild and captivating romances, allows herself to believe that the man in whose house she is a guest had, not long before, desired, perhaps connived at, the death of his own excellent and charming wife, or, at the very least, is keeping her immured in some dungeon on the premises. Such delusions could not be suffered to go unpunished. Nor were they, but having arisen from nothing worse than wonderful folly, the penalty inflicted is mercifully abridged. Still, the offender has to undergo a period of sharp anguish, brought upon her by a not unreasonable remonstrance on the part of the hero, a son of the supposed villain. Its effect was immediate. 'Catherine,' we read, 'was completely awakened. Most grievously was she humbled. Most bitterly did she cry. She hated herself more than she could express.' But Jane Austen, we are very sure, would never break a butterfly upon the wheel, conse-

quently we learn with no surprise that, after forming a resolution of 'always judging and acting in the future with the greatest good sense,' and being assisted by Henry Tilney's 'astonishing generosity and nobleness of character in never alluding to what had passed,' Catherine is ready to be consoled by 'the lenient hand of time,' which 'did much for her by insensible gradations in the course of another day,' and that she has nothing to do but to 'forgive herself and be happier than ever.' Nevertheless, so effectually has the work of penitence been performed that when General Tilney, not long afterwards, turns her out of his house at a few hours' notice, she magnanimously abstains from reverting to her previous suspicions that he has at an earlier period either poisoned or shut up his wife.

Passing from these playful pages to those of her latest and most pathetic work, 'Persuasion,' we find the same chord struck, but in a minor key and with a softer tone. Nothing glaringly wrong could become a character of whom her own creator wrote beforehand to a niece 'You may perhaps like the heroine, as she is almost too good

for me.' Anne Elliot's error was want of judgment, of too meek a submission to the direction of an older friend, an error that 'leaned to virtue's side,' and which was embraced by her unselfish spirit the more readily because, though destructive of her own happiness, she was persuaded to believe that it would promote the future good of a man whom she devotedly loved. Want of mental balance and some youthful weakness of character are the worst charges that can be brought against this almost perfect being, yet for these she has to suffer long and to learn, through suffering, the nature of the mistake she had made. Repentance, in the form of deep regret, overtook her as years passed on. 'She felt,' we are told, 'that were any young person in similar circumstances to apply to her for counsel they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness —such uncertain future good.' Captain Wentworth had on his side a worse fault to repent of. 'I was proud,' he cried, 'too proud to understand or to do you justice —too proud to ask you again. This is a recollection which ought to make me forgive

everyone sooner than myself.' Readers can only agree with both speakers and rejoice in the sequel that closes these confessions.

Much graver instances of misconduct and its subsequent results will be found in the four remaining novels. Even in the story written when Jane Austen was quite a young girl, called first 'Elinor and Marianne,' and afterwards 'Sense and Sensibility,' the plot is made to hinge upon the evils inflicted by the heroine upon herself and her family through too violent indulgence in a romantic passion. This renders her indifferent to the needs and the claims of other people, and blind to the sorrow of her sister, who is also suffering in silence from an unfortunate attachment. It is not until Marianne is herself in the depths of disappointed affection that her eyes are opened to the truths around her. Then—'Oh! Elinor,' she cries, 'you have made me hate myself for ever. How barbarous have I been to you!—you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me!' Such is her first burst of penitence, to be strengthened by time and a severe illness, after which

she speaks once more: 'I considered the past. . . . I saw in my own behaviour nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself and want of kindness to others. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave. . . . Had I died, it would have been self-destruction.' The enthusiasm of her self-reproving spirit flows on—to be checked only by resolutions of future amendment, for though as yet unable to believe that her remembrance of Willoughby will ever be weakened by time, she can still add, 'But it shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment' —a resolution sincerely made and faithfully kept.

Repentance in a double form comes before us in the next novel. Nowhere in any of her other writings does it play so conspicuous a part as in 'Pride and Prejudice.' The whole scheme of the book depends upon its being felt, in a very high degree, by the two principal characters, upon its influencing their actions during the last half of the book and leading steadily up to its

closing scenes. The late Professor W. Courthope has left a striking analysis of the manner in which this feeling affected the hero of the book and the consequent changes it wrought within him.[1] For this, as for the whole work, he expresses the warmest possible admiration, comparing it, on account of the manner in which 'under a commonplace surface a great artist has revealed a most dramatic conflict of universal human emotions,' to the structure of some grand Greek play. By no other writer can Jane Austen's genius have been dwelt upon with more eloquence or more sympathetic recognition; but even this appreciation is incomplete, for it contains no reference to the corresponding work of repentance effected in the heroine by the words and actions of the hero. Yet had this been lacking, the perfectly proportioned plot, to which he accords unqualified praise, could never have been constructed and developed. Elizabeth's self-reproach, so soon as she recognises the truth, is not less severe than Darcy's. 'She grew absolutely ashamed of herself . . .

[1] 'Life in Poetry, Law in Taste.' Lectures delivered in Oxford by Professor W. J. Courthope, 1895–1900. Vol. V.

of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.' 'How despicably have I acted,' she cried, 'I who have valued myself on my abilities . . . how humiliating is this discovery! . . . Yet how just a humiliation! I have courted prepossession and ignorance and have driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.' Again, in a confession to her sister she admits 'I was very uncomfortable, I may say, unhappy, and with no one to speak to of what I felt, no Jane to comfort me and say I had not been so very weak and vain and nonsensical as I knew I had! Oh! how I wanted you!' Time, by disclosing more of Darcy's real character, could only deepen such regrets and make her grieve over 'every ungracious sensation she had ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself she was humbled, but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour he had been able to get the better of himself. Darcy's self-condemnation was equally strong. 'My behaviour towards you,' he assures

her, 'merited the severest reproof. It was unpardonable. I cannot think of it without abhorrence. . . . The recollection of what I said, of my conduct, my manners, my expressions, is now, and has been for many months, inexpressibly painful to me. . . . I have been a selfish being all my life . . . what do I not owe you! You taught me a lesson hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you I was properly humbled.' Such reciprocal repentance and confession could not fail to bring reciprocal forgiveness, and the title of the book ceases to be appropriate before the last page is turned.

Reciprocity in error and penitence were not destined to console the remaining heroine, who falls, entirely through her own fault, into deep distress. Emma Woodhouse, having erred alone, has to endure her burden of remorse in solitude. Every reader will admit that Emma went through vanity further astray than Elizabeth Bennet through prejudice, a verdict foreseen by the author, who, while declaring that how she would be able to 'tolerate those who do not like Elizabeth she does not know,' frankly admits that in Emma she is going to take a heroine

'whom no one will like but herself.' She did take her, however, to endow her with that 'nature and spirit' which were dear to her own heart, and drawing a being, full of faults, and yet, as Emma's lover believes at the end, 'faultless in spite of them.' But justice could not allow this conclusion to be reached until great vicissitudes of feeling had been endured. Emma's faults had inflicted much pain and distress upon other persons, consequently, at the proper moment, they had to bring corresponding wretchedness upon herself. 'Her feelings,' we are told, after Mr. Knightley's expostulation on Box Hill, 'were combined of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern. . . . The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates!' Far heavier retribution, however, is still awaiting her when she, with horror, finds herself obliged to listen to Harriet Smith's outpourings of hopes and expectations respecting Mr. Knightley. Then she saw her own conduct with a clearness which had never blessed her before. . . . 'What blindness, what madness, had led her

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on! It struck her with dreadful force, and she was ready to give it every bad name in the world. . . . With insufferable vanity had she believed herself to be in the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken; and she had not quite done nothing—for she had done mischief.' 'What,' in conclusion, 'could be increasing Emma's wretchedness but the reflection, never far distant from her mind, that it had been all her own work? The only source whence anything like consolation or composure could be drawn was in the resolution of her own better conduct and in the hope that every future winter of her life would find her more rational, more acquainted with herself, and leave her less to regret when it were gone.' Satisfied with such genuine repentance, the author can now permit herself to make this favourite heroine once more happy.

Can we avoid perceiving that these five pictures of life resemble each other in so far that every one of them gives a description, closely interwoven with the structure of

the story and concerned with its principal characters, of error committed, conviction following, and improvement effected, all of which may be summed up in the word 'Repentance'? If so, do we not also through this perception gain more knowledge as to the habitual bent of that mind in which these successive creations arose? Does not Jane Austen's outlook upon life grow clearer to us when we learn that it was not merely by the 'follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies' (as she makes Elizabeth Bennet call them) ever visible on the surface of society, that her quick eyes were caught, but that her penetrating gaze went down to the hidden springs of action, prompting her to reflect upon the race that all human beings have to run in this world, upon the various courses they pursue, and upon the necessity of powerful influences being exercised over them, in order to bring about that improvement of character which is the final purpose of it all? Can we fail to see how, in dealing with these heroines, she desired to leave them, not only happier, but better, than she found them; wiser, stronger, humbler, and more charitable, richer in

self-control, and in that self-knowledge on which she always places a high value? If we have seen all this, we have seen also something of her hidden self.

There is still another book, standing in some respects apart from the rest, through which we acquire even more information on this subject. 'Mansfield Park' is the gravest novel Jane Austen ever wrote. It was composed after a long interval of silence, and may be called a 'Second First.' It was the result of a wider experience of mankind, together with that of various personal trials which she had to undergo during eight years passed in large towns after quitting Steventon in 1801. She herself when writing this book declared 'it was not half so entertaining as "Pride and Prejudice,"' an opinion with which her readers may or may not agree. In its pages humour, insight into character, creative genius, and power of description shine as brightly as ever, but in addition to these we are aware of a deeper seriousness and a more searching enquiry into the ultimate issues of conduct than had as yet appeared in her works. The author of the original

'Memoir' was informed that a number of well-known literary men who happened to meet at a country house agreed to write down the title of their favourite novel. The only name which appeared more than once was 'Mansfield Park,' and this had been chosen by three or four of the company, while all united in admiring the book. Such a power of attracting powerful minds may be due to the union of brilliant writing with serious reflection which its pages contain, and it is interesting to recall the circumstances under which this novel, the first important original work taken in hand by her for ten years, was written.

The lapse of ten years, beginning in early womanhood, can hardly pass over any head without producing sensible differences. To Jane Austen they had brought many changes, as enumerated in 'Life and Letters.'[1] Sorrow had touched her closely. She had lost through sudden death, and almost simultaneously, her father and her much-loved friend, Mrs. Lefroy of Ashe. The same cause had brought to an end her own personal romance, inflicting a wound which was, as

[1] *Life and Letters*, Chap. XIV.

we know, not the less but the more likely to have been deeply felt, on account of the silence preserved by Cassandra on this subject for many years after her sister's death, and the guarded manner in which she at length alluded to it. Other trials and troubles had come upon the Austen family in recent years, one being of a most unusual nature, threatening to overwhelm some of them in irretrievable disaster, and to bring lasting distress upon their whole circle.[1] That such practical acquaintance with some of life's heaviest afflictions should for a time stop all flow of fancy on Jane Austen's part is not surprising, nor that the only new work she began during this period should have been broken off at the end of the twelfth chapter, apparently because the author ceased to feel any interest in its contents. One more loss—this time neither sudden nor unusual—must be added to those already mentioned. She had lost her youth. At the age of twenty-five, while still a young woman, she had left her native place, her earliest friends, and every well-loved scene associated with the first overflowings of her

[1] *Life and Letters*, Chap. IX.

happy girlish fancies. It was the birthplace, not of herself alone, but of many creations, born to a far longer existence than hers was destined to be upon earth—all those characters that live and move for us throughout the pages of her first three novels. Eight years were to pass before a return to Hampshire would take place, and her own words have described how much such a period can include. 'Eight years . . . what might not eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations, removals, all, all must be comprised in it.'[1] The varied events which this passage of time had held for herself can hardly have been absent from her thoughts when she placed such a reflection in the mind of Anne Elliot, rejoicing no doubt that it was in her power to restore to that heroine a happiness which her own heart might never now know. It is certain that on beginning a country life at Chawton she and Cassandra were satisfied to assume to themselves, too readily as some of their relations considered, the position of middle-aged women. It is impossible, however, not to rejoice at any decision that ensured to

[1] *Persuasion*, Chap. VII.

her a larger amount of quiet leisure for composition, and now it was, after the revision of two earlier works had renewed the habit of writing, that 'Mansfield Park' was begun in February, 1811, to be finished in June, 1813.

Here we find the theme, never absent from her works, displayed again, and in an acuter form, for in this book we meet with the chief and saddest example of repentance that her pen ever drew—the saddest because, in a sense, the most unavailing. There can be no comparison between any of the cases already mentioned and that of an unhappy father whose 'anguish arising from the conviction of his own errors in the education of his daughters was never to be entirely done away.' Such are Sir Thomas Bertram's feelings as he contemplates a domestic tragedy for which he believes these errors to have been the primary cause. It is not with folly and thoughtlessness that 'Mansfield Park' deals, but with vice and sin, with misery and degradation; subjects the writer herself describes as 'odious,' which she touches as distantly and dismisses as rapidly as possible. That she forced herself to write of them at all tends

to show that some of the phases of the fashionable life she had been observing around her had impressed themselves so deeply on her soul that her spirit could not rest until she had entered a protest, through the medium of her own dramatic art, against these forms of evil. A record remains which shows that in her opinion this was the only proper method for a writer of fiction to employ. Soon after the publication of the original 'Memoir' its writer received a letter from a well-known clergyman, who stated that he had been intimately acquainted with a lady who had known Jane Austen well, and from whom he had heard much about her. He spoke of 'the tribute of my old friend to the real and true spring of a religion which was always present though never obtruded.' 'Miss Austen,' she used to say, 'had on all the subjects of enduring religious feeling the deepest and strongest convictions, but a contact with loud and noisy exponents of the then popular religious phase made her reticent almost to a fault.' She had something to suffer in the way of reproach from those who believed she might have used her genius to greater effect, 'but' (her old friend

used to say) ' I think I see her now, defending what she thought was the real province of a delineator of life and manners and declaring her belief that example, and not " direct preaching," was all that a novelist could afford properly to exhibit.'[1]

Means such as these when employed by herself are so powerful and speak so plainly that it is difficult to see how to any author the title of ' Moralist ' can be more justly given. Those who object to it in her case, as necessarily implying a double point of view in a writer's mind, destructive of that simplicity of aim which ought to be the inspiring motive of any true work of art, should consider whether there is in ' Mansfield Park ' any evidence that the design of the artist has been cramped by the mind of the moralist. There are, again, others who would disapprove of the terms ' Morality,' ' Moral Precepts,' as falling short of the highest ideals, and implying something that may be only cold and formal, based upon a theory that correct conduct should be maintained because

[1] This lady used to add, ' Anne Elliot was herself, her enthusiasm for the Navy and her perfect unselfishness reflect her completely.

it is in the long run the most likely method of obtaining success and comfort in this world. If so, then 'Mansfield Park' may again be quoted to refute, in its author's opinion, any such theory, for it contains a strong protest against worldliness and the ideals that worldliness upholds, whether in education, marriage, or general society. In this book she plainly declares her belief that moral conduct must spring from a deeper source and cherish a higher aim than this. She had seen, and would describe, how little dependence can be placed upon well-bred decorum and outward propriety unless they are inspired by religious principles. The veil of habitual reticence employed by her on these subjects is here drawn further back, and the language used is more explicit than in any of her other books. Sir Thomas Bertram's self-reproach is addressed to this very point. He came to feel, we are told, that 'Something must have been wanting *within*.' He feared that principle, active principle had been wanting; that his daughters had never been taught to govern their inclinations and tempers properly by that sense of duty which alone can suffice. They

had been instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice. To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments, the authorised object of their youth, could have had no useful influence that way, no moral effect on 'the mind . . . of the necessity of self-denial and humility he feared they had never heard from any lips that could profit them.' Again, the term 'Sin' is given to express flagrant evil. Edmund employs it in his last interview with Mary Crawford, and of her brother we are told that 'though too little accustomed to serious reflection to know good principles by their proper name, yet in his highest praises of Fanny he expressed what was inspired by the knowledge of her being well principled and religious.'

We learn here more of Jane Austen's deep feelings on moral questions than she has expressed elsewhere, but every allusion to them in her other works is in complete harmony with the teachings set forth in the latter chapters of 'Mansfield Park.' When, therefore, we find in the sister volumes the not infrequent words 'principles' and 'duty' we should remember how much they imply,

and that we have, as already stated, evidence proving her general reticence on these important points to be intentional and not accidental. 'Still waters run deep,' and the uniform though restrained teaching in these books assures us of the steadfastness of conviction respecting the highest subjects on the part of her to whom we owe their existence. The virtues she loves to cultivate in her characters she would certainly seek after for herself; the 'self-knowledge' she prizes so highly as a means of improvement she would personally desire for the same reason, nor was there in her that want of humility which prevents some souls from ever acquiring it. All her life she looked up to Cassandra as her superior in wisdom and goodness, and to its very close she esteemed others as better than herself, for on her deathbed she wrote to a nephew, 'God bless you, my dear Edward. If ever you are ill, may you be as tenderly nursed as I have been. May the same blessed alleviations of anxious sympathising friends be yours; and may you possess, as I daresay you will, the greatest blessing of all in the consciousness of not being unworthy of their love. *I* could not feel this.'

That she had reflected silently on solemn questions some expressions in her letters show us, and one of her elder nieces has written: 'When Aunt Jane was grave she was very grave, graver I think even than Aunt Cassandra.' Such thoughts on her part, and such an attitude of mind will not appear improbable when we recall her ancestry and education. Her father on one side, her grandfather on the other, had been excellent and active parish priests. By precept and by example she had received both from her stricter mother and her gentler father the firm religious principles which governed her throughout life. Mrs. George Austen writes, on returning from a visit to London, that in it 'everyone seems in a hurry,' adding ''Tis a sad place, I would not live in it on any account, one has not time to do one's duty either to God or Man' —a verdict that may provoke a smile, but which serves to show the speaker's conviction as regards the great object of human life. George Austen's instructions to his sons express, as might be expected, the same belief. In a long letter of advice, written to the elder of his two sailor sons, Francis,

when the latter first went to sea, 'attention to religious duties' is given the primary place, and never were they forgotten by him or by his brothers to the close of their long and honourable careers. Round these twin poles, therefore, 'Duty to God and duty to Man,' had Jane Austen been taught that life should revolve, and this it is that she always presupposes would be accepted in a like manner by the heroes and heroines in all her books. Not that she considers them to be 'already perfect.' 'Pictures of perfection,' she owns, 'make me sick and wicked.' No wonder! She knew human nature too well for it to be possible that she should accept them as faithful portraits, but this is what she wishes to make her own favourite creations aspire towards throughout the course of their several histories.

To some, perhaps to many, it may appear hardly necessary to insist upon all this. 'We have long known,' they would say, 'the moral tendency of her books, and have believed in the firmly religious convictions of the mind that produced them. Why, then, spend so much time on gilding gold or painting the lily white?' Two reasons may

be given in answer to this question, the first and obvious one being that what is evident to certain minds is not therefore so to all, and that among the latter class there may be those who sincerely desire a closer intimacy with Jane Austen's inner self, and who may, by taking the novels as a whole, find that they can come nearer to comprehending something fresh and fundamental respecting the nature and soul of their author. But there is a second reason, and not a slight one. Jane Austen has now more than one public. Her novels are read, appreciated, and reviewed in other countries besides our own. In France they have recently been again brought forward in a work of great ability, by a writer who describes her as 'une romancière que l'Angleterre compte parmi ses plus parfaits artistes de lettres et que l'originalité aussi bien que le mérite de son œuvre font qualifier d'incomparable.'[1] Mlle. Villard gave further proof of her admiration for Jane Austen's novels by choosing them as the subject of her

[1] *Jane Austen : sa vie et son œuvre*, par Leonie Villard, Agrégée de l'Université, Docteur ès lettres (1915), preface.

thesis when standing for the Doctorial degree lately bestowed upon her by the Sorbonne. Her knowledge and enthusiasm could hardly be surpassed, while the insight and talent with which her long and important book is filled can scarcely be overpraised. But though the merit of the book is great, this makes it only the more regrettable that the view taken by its writer of Jane Austen's character is so mistaken as to be in some respects exactly the reverse of the truth. This is especially the case when dealing with its religious aspect. Mlle. Villard first asserts that the Church of England was in the eighteenth century destitute of all religious fervour, which, in her own words, 'a disparu pour faire place à l'indifférence,'[1] and then passes from the general to the particular by assuming that the same must therefore be true of Jane Austen's writings, and that, for the characters she depicts, religion is merely 'une fait de même ordre que celui d'observer les règles de la bienséance mondaine.' In proof of this statement a remark of Archbishop Secker, divorced from its context, is given, no reference being made

[1] Page 235.

to any evidence leaning the other way furnished by English divines, or, above all, by those who employed the natural voice of strong emotion, poetry—though of these there were a considerable number, including such as belonged to the school of religious mystics. Of one of these latter—Norris—Sir F. Palgrave writes that in 1730 his poems had passed through ten editions, 'one proof out of many,' he adds, 'how exaggerated is that criticism which describes that period as devoid of inner life and spiritual aspiration.'[1] It is thus spoken of in 'La Vie,' where it is called cold, formal, concerned with externals only, and destitute of any 'élan vers un au-delà.' Having passed this judgment upon the Church to which Jane Austen belonged, similar conclusions are come to regarding herself. Sermons, it is said, were wearisome to her; but a love of sermons, as St. Louis told our Henry III. long ago, is not an indispensable element in the religious life. Moreover, Jane Austen herself says: 'I am very fond of Sherlock's Sermons, and prefer them to almost any.' It is also asserted that she took no interest in anything outside

[1] *The Treasury of Sacred Song*, Note CXLIX.

'a series of traditional rites,' as the services of her Church are called, and that she as a writer 'éloigne de son observation la souffrance, la tristesse et la laideur,' proving that, as a woman, she cared nothing for the sorrows and wants of the poor. Other entire misapprehensions of her nature are also evident, but being concerned with points of comparatively minor importance these need not be entered upon here. The sum total, however, represents a narrow nature, with a heart cold towards God and unsympathetic towards man, somewhat contemptuous of the needy and ignorant and caring little for any fellow creatures beyond those of her immediate family circle. Easy indeed is it to prove the contrary, both from her own letters and from the writings of her relations, and to show how completely such a conclusion misrepresents her attitude of mind towards the highest questions. But all serious students of her biography may be left to discover this for themselves. They can weigh the assertions made in 'La Vie' against the testimony given by those who knew her intimately as to her faith, unselfishness, humility, and the 'piety which ruled her in

life and supported her in death.' Above all, they will examine the records of that closing scene, when face to face with a comparatively early death, 'neither her love of God nor her fellow creatures flagged for a moment,' and will consider whether such faith, courage, and entire submission to the Divine will could have been felt by one to whom religion was 'merely a matter of externals.'

Mlle. Villard's book is, as a literary criticism, so exhaustive and valuable that it will probably be accepted in France as a standard work on Jane Austen and her novels. It may have already served to increase the number of readers in that country, and this number is likely to become larger, for at the present time, when a strong desire is felt that the bonds between our nearest Ally and ourselves should be drawn closer, those formed by a mutual study of each other's literature can hardly be neglected. As it must be desirable that correct ideas of the writer of any English classic should be offered to the French nation, those who are the most nearly concerned in seeing that justice is done to the personal character of Jane Austen, and

who are best able to speak of it from authentic and unimpeachable testimony, could hardly be excused if they failed to offer a protest against the estimate regarding it put forth in 'La Vie,' as being utterly unworthy of her and entirely misleading in respect of a vital part of her nature. It is well to recall that this was comprehended and rightly described by a juster and more discriminating judge nearly one hundred years ago, when Archbishop Whately, in the *Quarterly Review*, thus summed up his estimate of herself and her works[1]:

'Miss Austen introduces very little of what is technically called religion into her books, yet that must be a blinded soul which does not recognise the vital essence, everywhere present in her pages, of a deep and enlightened piety.'

[1] *Quarterly Review*, No. XXIV, January, 1821.

NOTE.—The present writer is happy to state that she has received an assurance from Mlle. Villard that the misapprehensions relating to Jane Austen's character objected to in this chapter shall be revised and amended in any future edition of 'La Vie.'

CHAPTER VI

'LADY SUSAN'

WHEN 'Lady Susan' first appeared in print, this title being prefixed to the second edition of Mr. Austen Leigh's original 'Memoir,' it was remarked by more than one critic that so short a story should hardly have been allowed to give a name to a whole volume. With this observation the editor entirely agreed. He knew it had been arranged that the tale itself should be placed after the 'Memoir,' together with other unpublished writings of the author, and, therefore, when the second edition of his work appeared, bearing the title of 'Lady Susan,' he felt both surprise and regret. He foresaw the disappointment of its readers when they should discover the nature and brevity of the story, and still more did he feel that to put forward, as though on a par with her other works, a character sketch which she

never intended to give to the world, would not appear on his own part to be showing due respect to the memory and judgment of his aunt. So scrupulous was he on this point that even in writing the short notice prepared for it, when he had no expectation that the title would be affixed to the whole volume, he said, 'If it should be judged unworthy of the publicity now given to it, the censure must fall on him who has put it forth and not on her who kept it locked up in her desk.'

The exact date of its composition is uncertain, but there are several reasons for preferring an early one. It was written in letters, the form used in some of the novels known to Jane Austen almost from childhood and employed by her when she was very young in (*a*) an unpublished fragment, (*b*) the first version of 'Sense and Sensibility, called 'Elinor and Marianne,' and again (*c*) in 'Lady Susan,' which seems to place the latter in the category of early compositions. This, it is true, would not be a sufficient proof if taken alone. The author may have thought that the most forcible way of dealing with Lady Susan would be by leaving her

to speak for herself, and might therefore have chosen to narrate the history in the form of letters. Critics have observed, not unnaturally, that this remarkable analysis of a vicious woman's nature seems a strange subject for a young girl either to have attempted or to have succeeded in, and such a conviction has made it the more difficult for them to imagine what date should be assigned to the work. There is, we believe, but one solution to this puzzle, one that was discerned by a correspondent of the present writer, whose position had enabled him to observe human nature closely, and who, though knowing Jane Austen's six novels well, had recently read 'Lady Susan' for the first time. He says in his letter concerning the book, 'I find it very clever. It is, of course, more bitter and worldly than her other works, but it shows a tremendous insight into shams. I feel quite sure the character is drawn from life.' How far the last remark is justified by facts may be decided after the reader has perused the following true history taken from a family MS.

'About two hundred years ago, Mr. and Mrs. ——, well-connected people, were

living on their property in the Midlands, with a family of one son and five daughters. The daughters had but a rough life. Their mother, a beautiful woman and most courteous and fascinating in society, was of a stern, tyrannical temper. They were brought up in fear, not in love. They were sometimes not allowed proper food, but were required to eat what was loathsome to them, and were often relieved from hunger by the maids privately bringing them up bread and cheese after they were in bed. Perhaps some of the traditions of their mother's personal cruelty to her children as endangering their lives went beyond the truth, but there could be no doubt that she was a very unkind and severe mother. When making long visits from home it was her custom to take one daughter with her to act, it was said, as her maid. On one occasion, all her daughters being then young women, and one of them being married, she did so—taking one daughter with her, and leaving three at home. Her absence lasted for several months. Their father, so far as is known, was likewise absent. Two of the three daughters took this opportunity of marrying, but not in

their own condition of life. One married the son of a neighbouring yeoman, and the other, a friend of her new brother-in-law, a horse-dealer. The first marriage turned out not so very bad, but the second was deplorable. The remaining sister, knowing how much her mother would resent these mis-alliances, and foreseeing nothing but increased severity in the house, could not resolve to face her anger. She also left her home before Mrs. —— could get back to it. All the sisters had £500 a-piece, left to them by an uncle—and on the interest of this little sum she resolved to try and live.' The further history of the last daughter was brighter. Friends and relations assisted her, and she finally made a suitable marriage in her own rank in life. Mrs. ——, when afterwards left a widow, married a gentleman of good property, with whom she had long been well acquainted. The descendants of the last-named daughter always spoke of her as 'the cruel Mrs. ——.' Among these, Jane, as a young girl, had intimate friends, and the whole tale would naturally become known to her. That it was so is also shown by a passage in one of her letters, perfectly comprehensible to those who

are acquainted with the names and details belonging to the foregoing history.

This being certain, and it being also certain that she wrote 'Lady Susan,' there is no room for doubt that the two facts are closely related to each other, and that she could not have depicted an inhuman, repulsive mother, carrying on her barbarities beneath a mask of charm and beauty, without having constantly before her thoughts the prototype of this exceptional character, of whose actual existence she was well aware. Why this knowledge caused her to write such a sketch—not for publication—may claim a moment's thought. To strongly imaginative and sensitive souls, 'wax to receive, and marble to retain,' revelations of beauty and glory, or of darkness and horror, come with a force beyond that which others can know, leaving an impression, amounting to a possession of the soul, not to be flung off until relief has been found through some outward and concrete act. When Byron died, and all the Tennyson family mourned him, it was Alfred who, as a boy, rushed out and endeavoured to express his sense of England's unspeakable loss by carving on a rock of sandstone, 'Byron

is dead.' He may have felt that in this way he and nature could mourn together, and that he had at least done something to record the despair of his heart in the face of this great calamity. A similar intensity of feeling, though this time of horrified indignation, may have seized upon Jane Austen's soul when the story of an unnatural and brutal mother was made known to her, overpowering her fancy to so great a degree that she was at last impelled to seek relief in gibbeting this repulsive being by setting down her character in writing, thus to express the depth of her disgust through the medium of her own peculiar Art.

So far as we know, it is the only 'Study from Life' that she ever made, nor was it now accomplished in order that it might appear again in any of her longer works. She once said that 'it was her desire to create, not to reproduce,' and there is nothing in the novels which calls 'Lady Susan' to mind, unless some hint of her unblushing worldliness can be found in Mary Crawford's letter to Fanny or of her maternal harshness in Mrs. Ferrars' behaviour to her eldest son. We are, therefore, compelled to believe that

the horror which oppressed her imagination, when reflecting on this picture of outward beauty and secret barbarity, could not be relieved without giving expression to her sense of its enormity by placing it upon paper. Had she never heard the tale, her youth might have saved her from conceiving the possibility of so evil a being, but having heard it, that same youth would intensify the repulsion and disgust it must create within her. That the sketch was not meant to meet the public eye is clear, partly because, in 1803, she attempted to publish a novel in two volumes, then called 'Susan,' later 'Catherine,' and finally 'Northanger Abbey,' and she would not have wished to give the same name to two published works, and yet more so because the strong resemblance between the character of 'Lady Susan' and that of her friends' ancestress would render such a thought impossible to her scrupulous sense of honour. The structure of the story itself confirms this view. Incident and plot are neglected throughout its course, in which there is little attempt to elaborate any character in such a way as to arouse the interest of the reader. The book is a figure-

piece, with a cruel, heartless woman for its single subject. In comparison with this central object, the rest of the *dramatis personæ* are but shadowy beings. Of one of these the author writes at the close that 'it must already have been evident that Mr. Vernon existed only to do whatever might be required of him,' and the same remark may be applied with a slight expansion in its meaning to the whole of the company, who exist merely to bring out the various vices united in one woman, a creature entirely devoid of conscience, and without a single redeeming quality.

That such unnatural mothers can be found is unhappily certain, a fact proved by the existence of a modern society for 'Prevention of Cruelty to Children'—generally from the cruelty of their own parents—but that they are on the whole rare is also happily true, and so great a monster is not to be met with anywhere in the six published novels. In this the author shows her usual wisdom. An artist, speaking of landscape painting, has observed that 'Nature employs only small spots of deep dark,' and the same may be said of that field of Nature in which

Jane Austen painted—human nature. She did not commit the mistake of taking exceptions for rules, nor of thinking the world must be villainous as a whole because some villains can be found in it. She avoids the use of 'deep darks,' and employs but seldom the lighter shades of evil, coarseness, and vulgarity, being, as it would seem, unwilling to blacken her canvas more than might be found necessary in order to provide some contrast to the brighter and purer tints of her picture. That she had either kind at command, should she choose to make use of them, is proved by the introduction, in their proper places, of Mr. Price and Nancy Steele, and, above all, by the more lately revealed character, 'Lady Susan,' who is drawn with an unsparing hand, showing that 'tremendous insight into shams' already mentioned. This inborn gift must have been greatly quickened by hearing the history of Mrs. ——. It would teach her to look below the surface, even in the case of parents and children, and would serve to assure her, whenever in the future she was describing parental harshness or tyranny, that she was still keeping well within the mark.

Although 'Lady Susan' must be placed in a totally different category from the other novels, it should not be neglected by anyone who wishes to form a just estimate of Jane Austen's varied powers as a writer, or of herself as a woman. That she drew such a portrait once enlarges our conception of her genius; that she never drew such another increases our value for her as a woman. She chose wholesome, sane, cheerful subjects, 'things of good report,' for her own imagination and that of her readers to dwell upon, describing evil as little as possible and never with a needless detail. This consideration will, it is thought, give additional force to what has been already said respecting the silent strength of her moral character. We can thus learn how to appreciate the self-control with which she resists any temptation to the use of extravagant language in describing emotions and situations, such as has earned for later writers the title of 'intense,' deeming it to be beneath the dignity both of true art and of that which is highest and best in human nature.

The words of an American writer, Mr. W. L. Phelps, well deserve to be quoted here:

'Let no one believe,' he says, 'that Jane Austen's men and women are deficient in passion because they behave with decency; to those who have the power to see and interpret there is a depth of passion in her characters that far surpasses the emotional power displayed in many novels where the lovers seem to forget the meaning of such words as honour, virtue, and fidelity.' These words Jane Austen certainly never forgot, either as an author or a woman. Several passages in her personal history show her to have been possessed of keen sensibility and deep attachments, but we know that her own sensations never made her indifferent to the claims of those with whom she lived, nor caused her to forget the call of 'Self-reverence, self-honour, self-control.' Tennyson's words she could not know, but the spirit that inspired them was akin to her own. Neither is there any evidence that she was acquainted with Wordsworth's poems, though the earliest of these were published twenty-four years before her own death. She probably never saw 'Laodamia,' written three years prior to that event, but if Wordsworth knew her writings and had wished to give a voice to

her consistent utterances concerning the strongest of all human emotions, he could not have done so more fittingly than in Protesiláus' well-known lines :

'Be taught, O faithful Consort, to control
Rebellious passion : for the Gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul;
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.'

CHAPTER VII

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

MENTION has already been made of various mistaken rumours spread abroad concerning Jane Austen during the first half-century that followed her death, one of these being that 'she did not like children.' No supposition could have been further from the truth. On no point is the family testimony more unanimous than on the unfailing love and kindness she bestowed upon them, together with the warm love they felt for her in return. She was quickly provided with such objects of affection, as four of her five brothers had families, and two nieces were born before she was herself grown up, both of whom lived to become, as young women, her close and intimate friends. Another younger niece has written: 'My visits to Chawton were frequent. I cannot tell when they began. They were very pleasant to me and Aunt Jane was the

great charm. As a very little girl I was always creeping up to her and following her whenever I could, in the house and out of it. Her charm to children was great sweetness of manner; she seemed to love you, and you loved her naturally in return. This was what I felt in my earliest days, before I was old enough to be amused by her cleverness. But soon came the delight of her playful talk. *Everything* she could make amusing to a child. Then, as I got older and cousins came to share the entertainment, she would tell us the most delightful stories, chiefly of Fairyland, and her Fairies had all characters of their own. The tale was invented, I am sure, on the spur of the moment, and was sometimes continued for two or three days if occasion served. I believe we were, all of us, according to our different ages and natures very fond of our Aunt Jane, and that we ever retain a strong impression of the pleasantness of Chawton life. One of my cousins, after he was grown up, used occasionally to go and see Aunt Cassandra, *then* left the sole inmate of the old house, and he told me that his visits were always a disappointment to him, for that he could not help expecting to feel

CHAWTON COTTAGE.

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particularly happy at Chawton, and never, till he got there, could he realise to himself how all its peculiar pleasures were gone.' Similar testimony on these points has been given by another niece—the little Anna who, when three years old, was placed by her widowed father, James Austen, at Steventon Rectory, to be 'mothered' by his two sisters. Anna composed stories of her own long before she was old enough to write them down, and had always a vivid recollection of the way in which her kind Aunt Jane performed that office for her. On reaching the age of seven she dictated to her aunt a drama founded on 'Sir Charles Grandison,' which still exists in Jane Austen's handwriting. Anna's half brother and sister, Edward and Caroline, had the same love of inventing stories, and all brought their compositions to be read and reviewed by their Aunt Jane—Anna continuing the practice as a young woman when she had embarked on what was intended to be a serious novel. For an author to be ready at any time to put aside her own writings—and such writings—in order to interest herself in these very young performances shows that entire

unselfishness of nature and ready sympa
with the wants of childhood which
always ascribed to Jane Austen by those
truly knew her.

Her pen was often at their service w
they were apart, for she wrote them charm
notes, with many playful turns, contain
now and then a little good advice as w
Her niece Caroline has truly said that
addressing a child she was perfect.' S
lived indeed in a circle of childhood, and wh
we look at her books we see how steady a
consistent a place children take in them
without uttering a word! The old-fashion
maxim that, when in company, childr
should always be seen and not heard, w
no doubt one on which Jane had herself be
brought up, and she observes the same ru
as regards the children of her fancy; t
reader is not troubled with any of th
remarks. Even the elder among them a
not allowed to say much. The auth
advised her niece Anna to remember tha
in novel writing, ' girls are not interesti
until they are grown up,' consequently of th
speeches of little Fanny Price and her cousi
only enough are given to show in few wor

their relative conditions and characters, to bring out the kindness of Edmund and the negligence of his sisters. Margaret Dashwood, as a half-grown girl, utters a few remarks equally malàpropos in themselves, and àpropos to the conduct of the story. But the younger ones are all silent, yet not the less valuable on that account. They provide motives for action and conversation on the part of their elders, and are even allowed on one occasion to take a small share in carrying on the drama of the plot. No fewer than twenty children, known to us by number or by name, and generally by the latter, appear in the course of the six novels, without counting the vaguer groups of little Harvilles at Lyme, and happily occupied little Perrys at Highbury. However slight the sketch may be, we can always recognise in it the sure touch of one who herself moved about childhood's realm as a constant visitor and a ready sympathiser. If we try to imagine Jane Austen's novels deprived of their children, we shall see that in some cases they could hardly be carried on at all, while in every instance that sense of simple truthfulness, of warmth, and of life which they now possess would be greatly

lessened or altogether wanting. Just as in the figure-pieces of early Italian masters the charm is enhanced and the general effect is completed by those miniature hills, rivers, and houses in the background, which provide a fitting setting for the central objects upon which they are never suffered unduly to intrude, so do Jane Austen's little people fill up, furnish, and decorate in a suitable manner the more distant portions of her scenes. Though at no time allowed to put themselves forward, they are, in their proper places and angles, highly useful by imparting a constant feeling of reality and by supplying a due sense of perspective, atmosphere, colouring, and space.

What is there, then, to be found in these books that could have led anyone to suppose their author did not like children? The idea must have rested on the fact that she did not like spoilt children, or, rather, that she strongly objected to the spoiling of children—a subject on which it is evident she bestowed a good deal of thought. But that this showed no want of interest in the children themselves may be read in a letter, written towards the close of her life to a niece, after she had been

spending some days in a house filled with younger cousins of the latter. She says: 'Though the children are sometimes very noisy and not under such order as they ought and easily might [be], I cannot help liking them or even loving them, which I hope may be not wholly inexcusable in their, and your, affectionate Aunt Jane Austen.' Here we see at once, not only a natural quickness of vision towards children, but also the even balance of her judgment when reviewing the whole case, 'the children might, and should [have been] kept in better order.'

It was towards the middle of the last century that a striking tale appeared, named 'A School for Fathers,' in which a charming young hero is forced into a duel, against his own inclination, by parental pride, and falls in consequence fatally wounded. Jane Austen's novels may be not unjustly entitled 'A School for Parents,' and this not merely with reference to the young children to be found in them, who are over-indulged by mothers until they become an annoyance to everyone. Her outlook goes much further than this. Our language, unfortunately,

contains no word expressive of the connection between parents and their sons and daughters, after the latter have ceased to be 'children'—properly speaking—and are becoming, or have become, men and women. But it is in these later stages of life that we find Jane Austen exhibiting to us the results of early training or of its absence. We do not learn this only in the case of such spoilt children as the little Middletons and Betsy Price, for older examples are as plainly dealt with, and their parents' faults are indicated with equal clearness. Mr. Allen, who is 'a sensible man,' soon discovers that 'Mrs. Thorpe is, without doubt, too indulgent to her daughters,' and we have Isabella in consequence. Mrs. Dashwood tells Marianne to ascribe her misfortunes to 'her mother's imprudence,' a remark with which the reader will easily agree—while of Mrs. Bennet it is enough to say that she was exactly fitted to be the mother of Lydia. Irreproachable parents—mothers especially—are indeed greatly in the way of any novelist, who has to get them out of the way as handsomely as may be. This truth was discerned very early in her own literary career by Jane Austen, one of her

girlish fragments, called 'Kitty, or The Bower,' beginning with these words: 'Kitty' (afterwards changed to Catherine) 'had the misfortune, as many heroines have had before her, of losing both her parents while she was still quite young.' But even when the maternal parent has been disposed of by death or by distance, the daughter must, none the less, be brought up or brought out by someone, who may contrive to go as far wrong in the process as any mother herself could do. Mrs. Weston, charming and sensible though she was, had been ruled for many years by her own charge, Emma; Edmund and Fanny agree in ascribing Mary Crawford's want of principle to deficiencies in the education she had received from her aunt, together with the bad example set by her uncle; and the one error into which Anne Elliot falls is spoken of as having been due to the mistaken advice of an older friend, who has over her almost the influence of a mother. Nor are the fathers spared. Mrs. Ferrars is the only instance of unfeeling harshness among the mothers, while both General Tilney and Sir Walter Elliot are absolutely unpardonable fathers, and there is also a good deal requiring

forgiveness in Mr. Woodhouse, Sir Thomas Bertram, and—not least—in Mr. Bennet, one of the author's most surprising creations. She had, as we have seen, gained a knowledge when still quite young, through a history belonging to past days, of the depths to which parental cruelty can descend, and we have also seen how this knowledge very probably quickened her insight respecting lighter shades of the same evil visible around her, the evil, it may be, 'that is wrought from want of thought, and not from want of heart.' Shortcomings on the side of parents are not shown to us merely by Jane Austen herself, speaking from her position as author, since she frequently points out that they were clearly apprehended by a daughter of their own. Some time later, a school of fiction arose, intended to a great extent for the young, in which it would have been held highly disrespectful for daughters to comment adversely, even to themselves, upon any action on the part of their parents, while to utter a remonstrance to either father or mother on their neglect of a parent's duties, would have been looked upon as an unpardonable liberty. Jane Austen, however, takes a different view, and never blames her

heroines for possessing some acquaintance with the characters of those by whom they had been brought up, being, as it would seem, of opinion that they could not become rational and thinking beings without acquiring such a perception, which she has no hesitation in attributing to some of the best among them. Poor Eleanor Tilney, when compelled to turn Catherine Morland out of the house, can only exclaim, 'Alas! for my feelings as a daughter. He is certainly greatly, very greatly, discomposed. I have seldom seen him more so.' Anne Elliot, who 'often wished her knowledge of her father's character were less,' could not but be aware of the weak vanity that laid him open to Mrs. Clay's insidious designs, while the most striking example of filial insight and resolution in character in all the novels is to be found in Elizabeth Bennet's remonstrance with her father on his neglect of responsibility as a parent. It must have been a hard task, but when it was over she 'felt confident of having performed her duty,' a reflection that can only do her honour in the mind of the reader, and, coupled with Mr. Bennet's most characteristic reference to it after Lydia's elopement had

found on the side of the children, even
over-indulged and, consequently, trouble-
For these she was unwilling to abandon
and here Mr. Knightley is deputed to
her mind. When Emma looks for-
to Mrs. Weston's educating her infant
ter in a perfect manner, since she had
ne advantage of practising first upon
—'That is,' replied Mr. Knightley,
will indulge her even more than she
ou, and believe that she does not
e her at all. It will be the only
nce.'
oor child!' cried Emma, 'at that rate
will become of her?'
othing very bad—the fate of thousands.
will be disagreeable in infancy and
t herself as she grows older. I am
all my bitterness against spoilt children,
arest Emma. I, who am owing all my
ness to *you*, would it not be horrible
itude in me to be severe on them?'
ne Austen could also admit the exist-
of other influences likely to affect the
te fate of children. She could take

taken place, shows that it had don
honour in his judgment also. Though
trust of a parent's wisdom was the comp
cause of the action taken both by Eliz
and by Anne, there was no lack of filial re
in their manner of performing it. This
no time wanting on the part of her her
even towards those for whom it was in
sible that love should be felt. Where
did exist, parental shortcomings were
suffered to check it. Marianne Dash
ardently loved her mother, imprudent th
she had shown herself to be, and E
Woodhouse, when engaged to the man
heart, at once formed a solemn resol
never to quit her father, and 'even
over the idea of it, as a sin of though

We must, then, come to the concl
that Jane Austen's quick intuition had d
impressed upon her the extreme impor
of parental duties being well performed
of the evils sure to follow if these
neglected. Dogmatic she never was,
her own light and delicate touches, join
the working out of various incidents in
plots, sufficiently indicate the views she

ning ready for publication, which may
s come out in a twelve months time.'
gain on March 23, 'Do not be surprised
ling Uncle Henry acquainted with my
another ready for publication. I could
y No when he asked me, but he knows
g more of it. You will not like it, so
ed not be impatient. You will, perhaps,
e heroine, as she is almost too good
.' Why Fanny was not to like it does
pear, but the tone of these remarks,
l with the author's intention of
g it laid by for a whole year, points
in the direction of an intended revision
a considerable length of time should
elapsed. Her brother Henry's testi-
confirms the belief that such was her
custom. He says: 'Though in com-
n she was equally rapid and correct, yet
incible distrust of her own judgment
d her to withhold her works from the
till time and many perusals had
d her that the charm of recent com-
n was dissolved.' A possible allusion

into consideration the child's own cha
and the power of surrounding circumst
The young Prices, not through parental
training, but in spite of its absence, pros
when aided by Sir Thomas Bertran
account of 'The advantages of early hard
and discipline,' and 'The consciousn
being born to struggle and endure.' S
consciousness, meeting with a like su
their efforts being in this instance encou
by their own parents, Jane may have
rejoiced over when reflecting upon
careers of her two sailor brothers.

'Persuasion' supplies us with a
different type of sailor, whose ill-doi
ascribed to his own perverse characte
not to any neglect on the part of his pa
Many readers have objected to the ter
which the unlucky Dick Musgrove's h
and his mother's lamentations over hi
described; they have been thought
and unworthy of Jane Austen's kind
and delicate taste. One reply alone c
made to this charge. Though she wrot
passage, she did not publish it. On
13, 1817, four months before her own

hat the fate of one might have been
s author lived longer is rendered a
questionable by her words to Fanny
t in March, 1817: 'Miss Catherine is
on the shelf for the present, and I do
ow that she will ever come out.' Had
ver done so, much delight must have
ost to many readers, and not a few
and terraces in Bath would have been
orer in associations for all those who
ve to imagine they are treading in the
of Morlands, Thorpes, and Tilneys,
'Persuasion' has so captured some
that their owners feel inclined to
to it the highest place of all. Never-
, when judgment is passed upon the
n that Jane Austen's books have won
lish classics, it should be remembered
Emma' is the last novel put forth by
a completely finished work of art; while
on to anyone to believe that changes
and probably would, have been made
later and unpublished story had she
survived to the close of the twelve
s which she had allotted to it as a
f silent retirement.

page had been written, does not see
have been ready for perusal, nor a
for announcement to her frequent conf
Henry, to whom, even after his pers
enquiries had forced her to confess its exis
it was not to be shown at present. In a
way it was certainly unfinished; it
received no name. Younger generatio
the family learnt subsequently, through
Aunt Cassandra, that this question had
a good deal discussed between Jane
herself, and that among several po
titles, the one that seemed most likely
chosen was 'The Elliots.' Nothing,
ever, was finally settled, and Henry A
to whose care it had been bequea
brought it out under the name of 'Persua
re-naming at the same time her other
left in MS. which she had called 'Cath
but which he published as 'North
Abbey.' Though it is possible to obj
both titles, as overweighting either
by referring to one incident or one div
rather than to the entire work, cri

sonal experience of the relations su
ing between parents and children. He
up a position that these, in Stev
Rectory, were not pleasant, and tha
family circle did not contain enough
and sympathy among its members for
to have felt or witnessed much do
happiness beneath her father's roof
that on this account she hardly ever
in her books any description of a happ
affectionate family party. A most
ordinary theory indeed! It leads
enquire how far its inventor has
studied either her books or her biogra
Did he altogether forget Mrs. Dashwoo
her daughters—their grief at partin
their eagerness for a reunion? O
household of the John Knightleys, w
master's 'strong domestic habits an
sufficiency of home to himself'? C
return of Catherine Morland to Ful
where, in spite of her woes as a he
she was welcomed with such affect
eagerness that 'in the embrace of ca

herself soothed, surrounded, caressed -
happy'? Or the Crofts—never satisfied
art—or the Westons, the Harvilles in
ng whose house 'Anne thought she
great happiness behind her'—or the
ners, and the 'fine family piece' of
hristmas party at Uppercross, alive with
and girls, Mr. Musgrove with children
uring on his knees and Mrs. Musgrove
ng happily round the room and observing
After all she had gone through nothing
o likely to do her good as a little quiet
fulness at home'?

hether we examine her writings or her
irs we are equally led to believe that no
new better than Jane Austen, both by
vation and experience, the meaning of
ord 'home' in its fullest and best sense.
seless is the conjecture mentioned above
ve may rather say the conditions of life
found in her father's house would
en her perception of the contrast afforded
em by some other families, through an
ce of peace and harmony in the latter
en parents and children, brothers and
. To assume that these were lacking
venton Rectory is a most unwarrant-

opposed to the truth. Evidence or
point is, happily, equally abundant
convincing. Mrs. George Austen, v
in 1796 to Mary Lloyd, soon to becon
daughter-in-law, speaks of her own
her husband's heartfelt satisfaction i
prospect of 'adding you to the num
our very good children.' In a letter v
more than twenty years later she ex
to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Leigh Perro
particulars of her income, and dwells
the eagerness all her sons had shown,
she had been left a widow in 1805, to
it a comfortable one. Of her two
she says: 'Mr. Knight (the second
has a most active mind, a clear hea
a sound judgment; he is quite a
of business. That my dear James wa
Classical knowledge, literary taste, an
power of elegant composition he pos
in the highest degree. To these Mr. K
makes no pretensions. *Both* equally
amiable, and sweet-tempered.'

The feelings and the conduct of
sons on the death of their father are
in letters written to the one then

loss of 'the best of Fathers and of Men,' adding 'Language is so inadequate to what we all feel on such a subject that you will know why I prefer silence to imperfect praise. The survivors are now what we must all think of.' The letters that then passed between the brothers on the question of making a comfortable provision for their mother are equally remarkable for the generosity they display towards herself and for the courtesy and affection they exhibit towards each other. When the result was finally made known to Mrs. Austen she exclaimed that 'Never were children so good as hers,' at the same time declining to accept the whole of the income which they offered her.

The author of the original 'Memoir' has indicated that if there were a family fault, it lay in exactly the opposite direction from that suggested by this critic. He says: 'There was so much that was agreeable in this family party that its members may be excused if they were inclined to live somewhat too exclusively within it. They might see in each other much to love and esteem and something to admire.' To this may be

party, Jane was the one chiefly cons
this family tendency, and most a
the duty of struggling against it.
another testimony may be added, tha
last-named writer's sister, Caroline
who, as a child and young girl, wa
at Chawton Cottage both befor
after her Aunt Jane's death; no
any more fitting words be found th
with which to close these 'I
Aspects of Jane Austen.' 'In the
my childhood, it was a cheerful ho
uncles, one or another, frequently
for a few days, and they were all ple
their own families; I have though
after seeing more of other households,
fully so. The family talk had muc
and vivacity, and it was never trou
disagreement, as it was not their l
argue with one another. There was
perfect harmony amongst the broth
sisters, with firm family union, never
but by death, and over my Grandf
door might have been inscribed the t

'Behold how good and joyful a thin

APPENDIX

Some additional information respecting Jane Austen and the family party immediately surrounding her may be acceptable to that inner circle of her readers who are willing to bear with a little repetition of facts in order to glean, from original documents, a few particulars not yet fully known to them. It is to such readers that the following extracts and remarks are offered.

The original 'Memoir,' after giving the account of her funeral, closes with these words: 'Her brothers went back sorrowing to their several homes. They were very fond and very proud of her . . and each loved afterwards to fancy a resemblance in some niece or daughter of his own to the dear sister Jane, whose perfect equal they yet never expected to see.' Of these nieces,

eldest daughter; Anna Austen, her bro
James's eldest daughter, who, prior to
Aunt Jane's death, had married Benja
Lefroy of Ashe (son of Madam Lef
Jane Austen's beloved friend); and An
half-sister Caroline Austen. It was of
latter that their father wrote in April, 1
'Caroline has that playfulness of mind, un
with an affectionate heart, which so peculi
marked our lamented Jane.' Fatherly
tiality did not mislead him in his high estir
of this daughter. Like her Aunt Jane,
had gifts both of humour and pathos, wl
combined with a similar originality
independence of mind, made her in
years a delightful companion and a charr
converser. Like her, also, she, in her t
became a perfect aunt to whom nephews
nieces are indebted for many kindne
one of these being the manner in which
related, both by word of mouth and in wri
family history and personal reminiscer
One of these gives an account of her e

s wedding.[1] This event was deeply sting to her grandmother, Mrs. Austen, o her aunts, Cassandra and Jane, the amed sending good wishes to the bride, in prose and verse. Nevertheless, all stayed quietly at home, making no pt to attend the ceremony, though ton and Chawton are but sixteen miles It is true that sixteen miles of in- nt road then formed a considerable r in wintry weather for ladies who sed no carriage and horses, but their e from the wedding is a fresh proof customary simplicity of procedure on occasions, such as we meet with in field Park' and in 'Emma,' which ly characterised Anna Austen's wed- lay.

roline Austen writes: 'On the 8th nber, 1814, my sister was married to min Lefroy, Esq. He had not then orders, although of the full age that ecessary. Weddings were then usually quiet. The old fashion of festivity ublicity had quite gone by, and was

universally condemned as showing the bad taste of former generations. But it revived again, and no protest is now ever heard against it. My Sister's wedding was certainly in the extreme of quietness; yet not so as to be in any way remarked upon, or censured, and this was the order of the day: The Bridegroom came from Ashe Rectory, where he had hitherto lived with his Brother; and Mr. and Mrs. Lefroy (his Brother and Sister-in-law) came with him, as well as another brother, Mr. Edward Lefroy. Anne Lefroy, the eldest little girl, was one of the Bridemaids and I was the other. My Brother came from Winchester that morning, but was to stay only a few hours. We in the house had a slight early breakfast upstairs; and between nine and ten the Bride, my Mother, Mrs. Lefroy, Anne and myself, were taken to Church in our carriage; all the gentlemen walked. The weather was dull and cloudy but it did not actually rain. The season of the year, the unfrequented road of half a mile to the lonely old Church, the grey light within of a

deficiencies least, I think, have given a
y air to our Wedding. Mr. Lefroy
he service. My father gave his daughter
The Clerk, of course, was there, though
not particularly remember him, but I
ite sure there was no one else in the
n. Nor was anyone asked to the
fast, to which we sat down as soon as
t back. I do not think this idea of
s struck me at the time. The bustle
house and all the preparations had
l me, and it seemed to me a festivity
beginning to end.
he Breakfast was such as best Breakfasts
were. Some variety of bread, hot rolls,
ed toast, tongue or ham, and eggs.
ddition of Chocolate at one end of the
and the Wedding Cake in the middle
l the speciality of the day. I and
Lefroy, nine and six years old, wore
frocks and had white ribband on our
bonnets, which I suppose were new
e occasion. Soon after breakfast the
and Bridegroom departed. They had
day's journey before them to Hendon.

The other Lefroys went home, and in th
noon my Mother and I went to Chaw
stay at the Great House, then occup
my Uncle Captain (Francis) Austen a
large family. My Father stayed behi
a few days and then joined us. The se
had cake and wine in the evening, a
Digweed walked down to keep my
company. Such were the Wedding fes
of Steventon in 1814!'

The dress of the bride has been re
by one of her own daughters. 'She
a dress of fine white muslin, and ov
soft silk shawl, white, shot with pri
with embossed white satin flowers an
handsome fringe, and on her head a
cap to match, trimmed with lace, a
delicate yellow tints must have been
becoming to her bright brown hair,
eyes, and sunny, clear complexion.'
bride was then twenty-one, and was
sidered to be the prettiest girl in the
bourhood, the most striking feature
face being the widely-opened large
eyes, which retained their brilliant

her brother Henry's house in London
days later, and had then the satis-
n of driving out to Hendon to visit
ece as a bride.[1] Anna and her husband
vards returned from Hampstead to
n a house called 'Wyards,' within a
of Chawton Village, and frequent com-
ation with her relations in that place
thus be easily maintained.

INE AUSTEN ON THE LIFE AT CHAWTON COTTAGE

Written in 1867

have been told the house had formerly
n Inn, and it was well placed for such a
se, just where the road from Winchester
into the London and Gosport road.
ront door opened on the road; a very
v enclosure on each side protected
ouse from possible shock of any run-
vehicle. A good-sized entrance and
arlours, called dining and drawing-room,
up the length of the house, all intended
ally to look on the road, but the large

[1] Cf. *Life and Letters*, Chap. XIX, p. 361.

drawing-room window was blocked up
turned into a bookcase when Mrs. A
took possession, and another was oper
the side which gave to view only tur
trees. A high wooden fence shut ou
road (to Winchester) all the length
little domain, and trees were planted
to form a shrubbery walk which,
round the enclosure, gave a very suf
space for exercise. You did not feel cra
for room, and there was a pleasant irr
mixture of hedgerow and grass and
walk, and long grass for mowing
Orchard, which I imagine arose fro
or three little enclosures having been t
together and arranged as best might
ladies' occupation. There was, besides,
kitchen garden; large and many out bui
not much occupied. All this afflue
space was very delightful to children
have no doubt added considerably
pleasure of a visit. Everything,
and out, was well kept, the house w
furnished, and it was altogether a comf
and ladylike establishment, though I
the means which supported it were bu

of Parsonage Houses then were, and much in the same old style, the ceilings low and roughly finished, some bedrooms very small, none very large, but in number sufficient to accommodate the inmates and several guests. The dining-room could not be made to look anywhere but on the road, and there my Grandmother often sat for an hour or two in the morning, with her work or her writing, cheered by its sunny aspect and by the stirring scene it afforded. I believe the close vicinity of the road was no more an evil to her than it was to her grandchildren. Collyer's daily coach with six horses was a sight to see!—and most delightful was it to a child to have the awful stillness of night frequently broken by the noise of passing carriages, which seemed sometimes even to shake the bed. The village of Chawton has, of course, long since been tranquillised; it is no more a great thoroughfare. . . . As to my Aunt Jane's personal appearance, hers was the first face that I can remember thinking pretty, not that I used that word to myself, but I know I looked at her with

a clear, brown complexion, and
hazel eyes. She was not, I believe, a
beauty, but before she left Stev
was established as a very pretty g
opinion of most of her neighbours,
afterwards from some of those
remained. Her hair, a darkish bro
naturally in short curls round her
then ringlets were not). She alw
a cap. Such was the custom w
who were not quite young—at l
morning—but I never saw her wi
My Aunts were particularly neat ;
all untidy ways in great dis-este
Jane began the day with music, f
conclude she had a natural taste, a
kept it up, though she had no one
and was never induced (as I ha
to play in Company, and none of
cared much for it. I suppose that
not trouble them she chose her
time before breakfast, when she
the room to herself. She practise
every morning. She played very pr
I thought, and I liked to stand h
listen to her. Much that she playe
Manuscript copies written out by h

At 9 o'clock she made breakfast—that was her part of the household work. The tea and sugar stores were under her charge—and the wine. Aunt Cassandra did all the rest, for my Grandmother had suffered herself to be superseded by her daughters *before* I can remember, and soon *after* she ceased even to sit at the head of the table.

'I don't believe Aunt Jane observed any particular method in parcelling out her day, but I think she generally sat in the drawing-room till luncheon, when visitors were there, chiefly at work. She was fond of work, and was a great adept at overcast and satin-stitch—the peculiar delight of that day. She was wonderfully successful with cup and ball, and found a resource sometimes in that simple game when she was suffering from weak eyes and could not work or read for long together. After luncheon my Aunts generally walked out; sometimes they went to Alton for shopping, often, one or the other of them to the "Great House," as it was then called, in order, when a brother was inhabiting it, to make a visit; or, if the house were standing

not extend far. There were a fe
living in the village, but no great
was kept up with any of them ; the
friendly, but rather distant, terms
Yet I am sure my Aunt Jane had
for her neighbours, and felt a kind
in their proceedings. She liked i
to hear all about them. They
served for her amusement, but i
own nonsense that gave zest to t
She never turned *them* into ridicule
as far as possible from being cen
satirical ; she never abused them or '
them. That was the word of the
ugly one, now obsolete—and the ug
which it bespoke is far less preva
under any name, than it was t
laugh she occasionally raised was by
for her neighbours impossible contin
relating in prose or verse some triflin
coloured to her own fancy, or in
history of what they had said or
could deceive nobody. My Aunt
spent much time in writing. Her

in the drawing-room; I often saw her writing letters on it, and I believe she wrote much of her novels in the same way, sitting with her family when they were quite alone, but I never saw any manuscript of that sort in progress' (Caroline may, however, have done so without knowing it, as it was her Aunt's habit to write them on note paper, the better to be able to cover them with blotting paper if a visitor were shown in). 'She wrote very fully to her brothers when they were at sea, and she corresponded with many others of the family. There is nothing in these letters which *I* have seen that would be acceptable to the public. They were very well expressed, and they must have been very interesting to those who received them, but they detailed chiefly home and family events and she seldom committed herself even to any opinion, so that to strangers there could be no transcript of her mind; they would not feel that they knew her any the better for having read them. They were rather overcautious for excellence. Her letters to Aunt Cassandra were, I daresay, open and confidential. My Aunt looked them over and burnt the greater part as she told

She left or gave some as legacies to the fi
but of those that I have seen several
portions cut out.' (The 'Brabourne lett
did not appear during this writer's life-ti
'When staying at Chawton, if my two cou
Mary Jane and Cassy Austen, were there
often had amusements in which my A
was very helpful. She was the one to w
we always looked for help. She would fur
us with what we wanted from her ward
and she would often be the entertaining vi
in our make-believe house. She amuse
in various ways, once, I remember, in gi
a conversation, as between myself and my
cousins, supposed to be grown up, the
after a ball. She was considered to read a
remarkably well. I did not often hear
but once I knew her take up a volum
Evelina and read a few pages of "Mr. S
and the Branghtons," and I thought it
like a play. She had a very good spea
voice. This was the opinion of her con
poraries and though I did not *then* thin
it as a perfection, or even hear it obse
upon, yet its tones have never been forgo
I can recall them even now, and I know
were very pleasant. Aunt Jane was a

affectionate sister to all her brothers. One of them in particular (Henry) was her especial pride and delight, but of all her family her nearest and dearest throughout her whole life was her only sister, Cassandra. Aunt Cassandra was the elder by three or four years, and the habit of looking up to her, begun in childhood, seemed always to continue. When I was a little girl, Aunt Jane would frequently say to me, if opportunity offered, that Aunt Cassandra could teach everything much better than she could—Aunt Cassandra knew more—Aunt Cassandra could tell me better whatever I wanted to know—all of which I received in respectful silence. Perhaps she thought my mind wanted a bias in that direction, but I truly believe that she did always really think of her sister as the superior to herself. . . . The most perfect confidence and affection ever subsisted between them, and great and lasting was the sorrow of the survivor when the final separation was made.'

The testimony given by Caroline's elder sister Anna is entirely to the same effect. 'Aunt Cassandra's loss in her sister was *great*

other. They seemed to lead a life to
selves within the general family life whi
shared only by each other. I will n
their true but their *ill* feelings and op
were known only to themselves. They
fully understood what each had suffere
felt and thought. Yet they had s
gift of reticence that the secrets of
respective friends were never betray
each other. They were thoroughly
worthy, and the young niece who broug
troubles to Aunt Jane for advice and
partly knew she could depend absolut
her silence, even to her sister.'

When writing to her brother, Capt.
Austen then stationed in the Baltic, Septe
1813, Jane refers to the fact of her n
shipped 'Sense and Sensibility' and 'Pri
Prejudice' having been revealed by
brother Henry, and says: 'I know it
done from affection and partiality, but
same time let me here again express t
and Mary are quite of the *superior* kin

existence—even in this world.' She have had an equally keen sense of tude to her eldest brother James and vife (another Mary) for the strictly urable silence they had preserved on ubject, in spite of what must have been ong temptation to act otherwise. Their Edward, then a boy at Winchester, read both these books with great nt, but had never been told that his Jane had written them. Now, how- further silence was needless, and he has record of his feelings, on hearing the news, in the following lines. Though en by a boy not yet quite fifteen years hey are worth reading, if only to show happy and intimate terms on which nd his Aunt Jane stood towards each :—

To Miss J. Austen

words can express, my dear Aunt, my urprise
make you conceive how I opened my eyes,

Like a pig Butcher Pile has just struck with his knife,
When I heard for the very first time in my life
That I had the honour to have a relation
Whose works were dispersed through the whole of the nation.
I assure you, however, I'm terribly glad;
Oh dear! just to think (and the thought drives me mad)
That dear Mrs. Jennings's good-natured strain
Was really the produce of your witty brain,
That you made the Middletons, Dashwoods, and all,
And that you (not young Ferrars) found out that a ball
May be given in cottages, never so small.
And though Mr. Collins, so grateful for all,
Will Lady de Bourgh his dear Patroness call,
'Tis to your ingenuity really he owed
His living, his wife, and his humble abode.
Now if you will take your poor nephew's advice,
Your works to Sir William pray send in a

e'll undertake to some grandees to show
,
whose means at last the Prince Regent
night know it,
I'm sure if he did, in reward for your
ale,
make you a countess at least, without
ail,
indeed if the Princess should lose her
ear life
might have a good chance of becoming
is wife.'

Oh! Journal. Oh! Journal,
Thou torment diurnal,
Hydra so hopeless to slay!
demolish one head,
Before going to bed,
l another starts up the next day!'

MS.

ese lines, composed about ninety years
ecurred involuntarily to the mind of
resent writer before this book was
d. One reason for undertaking the

mentators respecting Jane Austen and her surroundings. To members of her own family some of these mistakes seem hardly excusable, but in the conviction that they were not 'set down in malice,' but only in haste, or in an unconscious desire to support some pre-conceived theory, it was hoped that by drawing together in a connected whole a variety of facts scattered throughout Jane Austen's biographies, all serious misrepresentations of her home, her family, and her own nature would be avoided in the future. But quite suddenly a new and strange tale respecting her has started up. It appears in an interesting book,[1] recently published, and as it may be widely read such a story cannot be left unnoticed. Miss Ethel Smyth, the authoress, who had a bachelor great uncle, Wm. Smyth, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, says: 'My father used to tell an odd little story about his uncle and Jane Austen, who were close friends. It appears that the authoress, wishing to get at his real opinion of one of her novels, put on a friend to pump him, concealing herself meanwhile behind a curtain. The

verdict was luckily all that could be desired till the Professor remarked he was not quite certain as to her orthodoxy, having detected slight Unitarian leanings in her later works, upon which Jane Austen burst forth from her hiding place, indignantly crying: "That's not true!" One may question whether any degree of intimacy condones such a stratagem, but no doubt she knew her man.' Miss Smyth describes this as 'a curious sidelight on an elusive personality.'

For more than one reason this story cannot be accepted as accurate. That Dr. Smyth should discover in either of her 'later works,' 'Mansfield Park' and 'Emma,' Unitarian leanings, may surprise us, but it would be far more surprising could we believe that Jane Austen, with her high sense of honour, had chosen to imitate some of her own least worthy characters, the two Miss Steeles, by concealing herself in order to overhear anything concerning herself which she believed the speaker would have desired she should not hear. Elinor Dashwood's displeasure when she finds that Nancy Steele has been behaving in this way, cannot be forgotten by the readers of 'Sense and

well acquainted with Jane Austen, t
as his name never appears in any
letters, it must be uncertain whetl
could have been 'a close friend' of o
did not easily make such friends. Bu
ever well she may have known him, r
would in her eyes have excused such c
nor will the hasty action and languag
imputed to her appear, to those wh
studied her books and her character,
any resemblance to her own. The
also other reasons for declining to
the story as it now stands. 'Emma
published in December, 1815, and in th
month Jane Austen returned from I
to her home at Chawton, which she
quitted for her last journey to Winc
May 23, 1817. The intervening sev
months brought severe trial and
to all the George Austens. Henr
declared a bankrupt in March, 1816,
only just recovered, in January, 181
a three months' illness, in the course of
his life had been despaired of. Ja
nursed him all the time, at the expe

her, and she consulted a physician in London before returning home, not yet as an avowed, but as an incipient, invalid, who was depending more and more exclusively upon her immediate family for society.[1]

She scarcely left her home after this return, but she once paid a visit to old friends in Berkshire (who noticed with concern that a change had taken place in her health and bearing), and she once went to Cheltenham in the vain hope of deriving benefit from its waters. Cheltenham is the only place where she might have fallen in with Dr. Smyth after 'Emma' was published; but if such a meeting occurred her state of depression and weakness makes it doubly unlikely she would lay a trap for a friend such as she had denounced many years before in one of her earliest books. We can only conclude that whoever may have attempted to deceive Dr. Smyth in this way it could not at any time, and least of all at that time, have been Jane Austen, who never had anything in common

ing the opinions of those who read
novels was a great entertainment to
and there is a long list of such ver
both good and bad, on 'Emma' giv
her biography.[1] In this list Dr. Sm
name does not appear. It is, how
possible that an attempt to obtain his op
in the manner described above, was
by some common friend, so intim
acquainted with Dr. Smyth as to mak
artifice appear permissible, since it
relate to a third person only.

At the close of the original 'Me
its author, after correcting a complete mi
made by Miss Mitford respecting Jane A
which she had given on her mo
authority, adds these words which
very well be quoted here: 'All p
who undertake to narrate from hearsay
which are supposed to have taken
before they were born, are liable to
and are apt to call in imagination to th
of memory: and hence it arises that
a fancy piece has been substituted for ge

CHARADES

WRITTEN A HUNDRED YEARS AGO BY JANE AUSTEN AND HER FAMILY

It is hoped that these old-fashioned charades and conundrums possess a degree of merit sufficient to afford entertainment to any persons inclined to take pleasure in this kind of amusement, and, more especially, that they may interest that inner circle of readers who love the name of Jane Austen.

It is not as a celebrated writer that she appears in these pages, but as one of a family group gathered round the fireside at Steventon Rectory, Chawton Manor House, or Godmersham Park, to enliven the long evenings of a hundred years ago by merry verses and happy, careless inventions of the moment, such as flowed without difficulty from the lively minds and ready pens of those amongst whom she lived.

Three of these charades are by Jane herself, and even if her name did not appear beneath them their authorship might possibly have been apparent to those already acquainted with the playful exaggerations and sparkling nonsense in which she sometimes loved to indulge when writing with perfect

the soberest decorum in the charade laid lo
upon the table at Hartfield, and transcrib
Emma into that thin quarto of hot-pressed
in which Harriet was making 'her only
provision for the evening of life.'

The habit of writing charades seems to
been general in the Austen family. Only one
father survives, but there are several by her m
Cassandra Leigh by birth, who was well gifted
to use a term of her own—'sprack wit.' Cassa
brother, James Leigh, who inherited the est
North Leigh in Oxfordshire from the Perrot
added their name to his own, was noted in the
as a writer of good charades, and four of h
the way in this little collection. They may
been composed by him in his young days at
in which gay and fashionable resort he and h
were often to be found, or at his country
Scarlets, in Berkshire, where as an older m
passed most of his time.

All the other charades come from the p
three generations of Austens, and are in
according to the ages of the writers. Next in
to the charades by Jane's parents come th
her eldest brother, James, who on his father's
succeeded to the family living of Steventon, H
then one by her brother Henry, a brilliant, vo
member of the family party. The next is
sister, her second self, Cassandra; and the succ
one by Francis, the elder of her two sailor br

aged ninety-two. Jane's own charades follow next in order. Two of her brothers are not represented here, Edward Austen, afterwards Edward Knight, and Charles, the youngest of the family. The last two charades are by a nephew, who, being nearly nineteen at the time of her death in July, 1817, and well able to use his pen before that time, can claim a place among the Steventon writers, even though his charades may possibly date from the comparatively modern period of only seventy or eighty years ago.

The key to No. 5, the only one of her father's we possess, was long lost, and many accomplished charade-guessers tried in vain to recover the meaning, which he had hidden with much graceful subtilty. It was at last discovered not very long ago by his great-great-grandson, the late William Chambers Lefroy, Esq., of Goldings, Basingstoke.

The accompanying portraits are taken from family miniatures. That of Jane Austen and the engraving of her home at Steventon Rectory are reproduced, by the kind permission of Mr. Richard Bentley, from her Memoir published by his father in 1870. Most sincere thanks are due to Miss Ellen G. Hill, of Inverleith House, Hampstead, to whose talent and kindness we owe the illustrations she has

I

Two brothers, wisely kept apart, togeth
ployed.
Though to one purpose both are bent, e
different side.
To us nor heads nor mouths belong, ye
tongues appear,
With them we never speak a word, withou
less are.
In blood and wounds we deal, yet good in
are proved ;
We are from passion always free, yet o
moved.
We travel much, yet prisoners are, and cl
to boot.
Can with the swiftest horse keep pace, ye
on foot.

JAMES LEIGH

II

A HEAD and mouth I have, but—what's th
My head and mouth are very far asun
In at my mouth each day what I rec
Without emetics, back again I give.
Eyes I have none, yet never miss my
I have no legs, yet quickly run away.
With one hint more enough will sure
I always travel, always keep my bed.

JAMES LEIGH

III

In confinement I'm chained every day,
Yet my enemies need not be crowing,
To my chain I have always a key,
And no prison can keep me from going.

Small and weak are my hands I allow,
Yet for striking my character's great.
Though ruined by one fatal blow,
My strokes, if hard pressed, I repeat.

I have neither mouth, eye, nor ear,
Yet I always keep time as I sing,
Change of season I never need fear,
Though my being depends on the spring.

Would you wish, if these hints are too few,
One glimpse of my figure to catch?
Look round! I shall soon be in view
If you have but your eyes on the watch.

James Leigh Perrot

IV

Though low is my station,
The Chief in the Nation
On me for support oft depend;
Young and old, strong and weak,
My assistance all seek,
Yet all turn their backs on their friend.

IX

SINGLY to possess my charms,
Soldiers, fearless, rush to arms;
Lawyers to their briefs apply,
Politicians scheme and lie;
Disregarding toil and scars,
And when they've gained me—bless their stars

But when joined with any other,
Though it be a very brother,
All our glory's banished quite,
We are then kept out of sight.

Modest ladies scarce will name us,
Though we made one lady famous,
Yet guess for once our name aright,
And when you find us, keep us tight.

JAMES AUSTEN.

X

IN my first, that he may not be tardy and la
My second to do, and make nobody wait,
A curate oft crosses the plain;
But if to my whole he should ever advance,
To me it appears an improbable chance
That he'll ever do either again.

JAMES AUSTEN.

XI

By all prudent folk he a rash man is reckoned
Who, before he has gotten my first, takes my second,
Yet my first will afford him but little delight
To the name of my whole if my second's no right.

James Austen.

XII

Divided, of an ancient house am I
A long, and dark, and sometimes useless story;
United, I declare the station high
Of those who best support old England's glory.

James Austen.

XIII

My first a horseman's dire disgrace would tell
If it were only longer by an ell;
My next, if strong enough and not too short,
Will always prove old age's best support;
But much I doubt if any living wight
Could well support my whole for one short night.

James Austen.

If there be truth in proverbs old,
Though best of servants, is of ma
Ruin unlimited my second brings
Then, flushed with triumph, knave
kings;
My whole a different scene, more w
Saw kings victorious, and a vanqu

JAME

XV

I with a Footboy once was curs
Whose name when shortened me
In an unruly rogue was reckone
And in the house oft raised my
My whole stands high in lists of
Exalted e'en great Chatham's n

HE

XVI

Since I no vengeance to suffer
Two and second to my first;
My [illegible] in the garden sh
And I can be fairly called a d

QUEEN ELIZABE

XVII

By my first you may travel with safety and speed,
Though many dislike the conveyance indeed;
My second no woman can well be.
My whole takes a change several times in a year
Hot and cold, wet and dry, benignant, severe,
What am I, fair lady, pray tell me?

FRANCIS WILLIAM AUSTEN.

XVIII

WHEN my first is a task to a young girl of spirit,
And my second confines her to finish the piece,
How hard is her fate! but how great is her merit
If by taking my whole she effect her release!

JANE AUSTEN.

XIX

DIVIDED, I'm a gentleman
In public deeds and powers;
United, I'm a monster, who
That gentleman devours.

JANE AUSTEN.

XX

You may lie on my first by the side of a stream,
And my second compose to the nymph you adore,
But if, when you've none of my whole, her esteem
And affection diminish—think of her no more!

JANE AUSTEN.

XXI

SHAKE my first, and to you in return it will give
A good shake, perhaps rather too rough.
If you suffer my second a twelvemonth to live
You will find it grown quite big enough.
My whole stands all day with its back to the wall,
A sad gossip as ever you'll meet,
Knows the first of each robbery, concert, or ball,
And tells every soul in the street.

JAMES EDWARD AUSTEN (LEIGH).

XXII

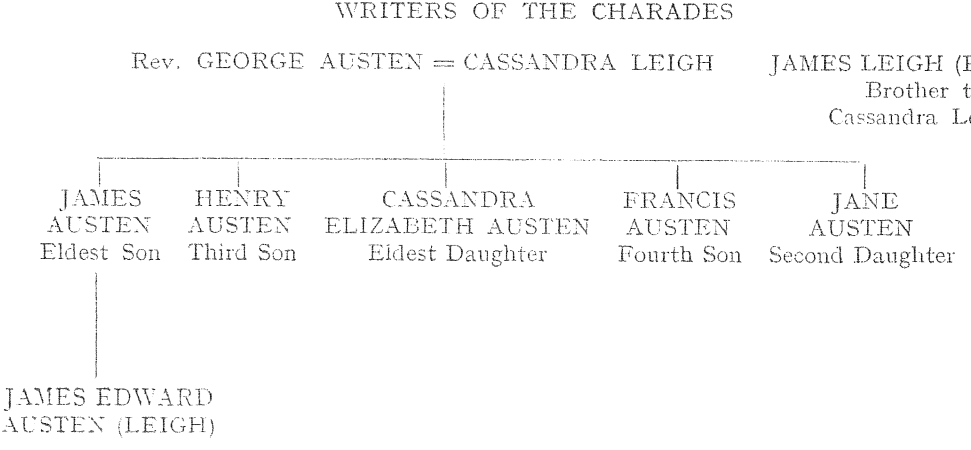
My first to aid the works of man
From heaven a present came,
And yet this gift, do what he can,
He cannot catch nor tame.

For now 'tis on the mountain's brow,
And now 'tis on the wave,
Now sighs in Beauty's bower, and now
Howls o'er the maniac's grave.

My second, like my first, I'm sure
From heaven its essence drew
As soft, as fragrant, and as pure;
Say not, as changeful too!

My whole explores earth's deepest stores,
And draws exhaustless up
The purest draught that e'er is quaffed
From mortal's varying cup.

JAMES EDWARD AUSTEN (LEIGH).


WRITERS OF THE CHARADES
Rev. GEORGE AUSTEN = CASSANDRA LEIGH
JAMES LEIGH (
Brother t
Cassandra L
JAMES AUSTEN Eldest Son
HENRY AUSTEN Third Son
CASSANDRA ELIZABETH AUSTEN Eldest Daughter
FRANCIS AUSTEN Fourth Son
JANE AUSTEN Second Daughter
JAMES EDWARD AUSTEN (LEIGH)

KEY

I. Pair of Spurs.
II. River.
III. Repeating Watch.
IV. Chair.
V. A Light.
VI. Jack.
VII. Turnpike.
VIII. Merry-thought.
IX. Garter(s).
X. Canterbury.
XI. Housewife.
XII. Aloft.
XIII. Falstaff.
XIV. Waterloo.*
XV. Patriot.
XVI. Liquorice.
XVII. Season.
XVIII. Hemlock.
XIX. Agent.
XX. Bank Note.
XXI. Handbill.
XXII. Windlass.

* In the game of Loo, Knaves are reckoned above Kings, the form of the game is called 'Unlimited Loo.'

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